Part Three: Other factors influencing women's position

Education for girls

Until the 1880s education for girls changed little. Though few figures are given, in 1881 40% of girls aged seven to fourteen attended government schools, 29% private schools and 20% were educated at home, with 11% receiving no reported education.[1] The government system, catering for working-class children,[2] provided basic literary and numeracy to the age of thirteen. Standards were not usually high, though they improved slowly from the 1850s when the system was better organised and attempts at amelioration were made. Virtually all schools were co-educational and boys and girls were treated the same way, though girls learned needlework as preparation for their expected future careers as wives and mothers, while boys learned extra arithmetic.[3] No other vocational training was provided. There were some charitable schools for poor children; these provided a similar education to government schools.[4]

As has been described in the section covering teachers, a large number of private schools came and went, catering mainly for middle-class children. They ranged from those run by competent teachers such as Mrs Clark at Ellinthorp Hall[5] to mere childminding establishments,[6] but aimed to some degree at least to turn girls into young ladies, providing the accomplishments - music, art, embroidery, French - which would mark their holders as young ladies.[7] Most private schools were small, run in the owner's home and treating pupils as part of the family (some took boarders)[8]; most were ephemeral; academic education was

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[1] Census 1881 p. 55

[2] HRA 3, 2, p. 345; 3, 3, p. 367; *House of Assembly Journals* 1862 paper 9, p. 22

[3] *House of Assembly Journals* 1871 paper 21, p. 20; *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1903 paper 21, pp. 9-10, 12

[4] A. Alexander *Governors' Ladies* THRA, Hobart, 1987, pp. 90, 102, 130, 134; *Colonial Times* 23 September 1836, 1 January 1839; *Hobart Town Advertiser* 24 August 1858

[5] G. Stilwell 'Mr and Mrs George Carr Clark of "Ellinthorp Hall"' in THRA *Papers and Proceedings* vol 11, no 3, pp. 72-109

[6] For example, Hugh Hull and his sister attended Miss Pitt's school; Miss Pitt was kind and gave them bread and honey but 'very few were the lessons I learned with her', commented Hull (Lucille Andel *Clerk of the House* the Author, Melbourne, 1984)

[7] See advertisements, for example *Mercury* 7 January 1860

[8] See advertisements, for example *Colonial Times* 18 January 1842, *Mercury* 4 January, 11 June 1860. Minnie Clarke described one school she attended in the 1860s. She 'hardly knew what she learnt'; lessons

usually of a low standard and the standard of private schools was criticised in 1860.[1] Most teachers were untrained and simply passed on the scanty education they themselves had received; Tasmania was not a well-educated society and parental ambitions for girls' education centred more on ladylike accomplishments than intellectual development.

Girls educated at home sometimes learnt from governesses, who offered education of varying quality;[2] some were useless, some proficient. Some mothers taught their own children. In many cases 'educated at home' was a euphemism for receiving no education at all, or possibly picking up a little from busy parents.[3]

From the 1850s there was some attempt to provide secondary education. To train teachers, the government instituted a pupil-teacher system which gave trainee teachers some post-primary education. There were more girls than boys and by the end of the century fifteen to twenty girls a year were accepted.[4] Exhibitions were provided to assist with fees to private secondary schools; girls were included from 1876, with six exhibitions provided.[5] Approximately twenty girls a year from government schools were therefore provided with some secondary education.

It is difficult to estimate when private schools began to offer secondary education. In 1867 and 1873 Presentation Sisters opened convents which, though providing similar education and with a similar emphasis on ladylike accomplishments to existing schools, were the forerunners of change; they were larger, more stable institutions.[6] The first school based on new, large colleges providing an organised curriculum and academic secondary education, which were beginning to appear in Britain, was the Hobart Ladies' College, opened in 1875 and providing a full secondary education.[7] In 1872 the Associate of Arts degree, taken at the end of secondary school, was opened to girls and in the next twenty years 72 girls passed it.

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were gentle and leisurely, and pupils read history aloud and learnt poetry and little catechisms by rote. Nothing was explained (Girls' High School Magazine October 1911 pp. 1-2)

[1] *Legislative Council Journals* 1860 paper 18 pp. 34, 35, 38

[2] See advertisements, for example *Colonial Times* 26 January 1827, 15 January 1839; *Mercury* 5 January 1870. Sarah Leake at Campbell Town taught her two nieces aged seven and eight reading, writing, spelling, music and occasionally arithmetic (UTA L1/8/2 [3] August 1877-April 1878 passim)

[3] Helen Power, later a noted poet, received little regular schooling but had the run of her father's library (National Trust [Tasmania] *Campbell Town Tasmania* Campbell Town Municipal Council, Campbell Town, 1968, p. 322)

[4] Annual reports of the Education Department, 1858-1900, in parliamentary papers

[5] Reports of Exhibitions Examinations 1876-1893, in parliamentary papers

[6] *Tasmanian Catholic Standard* December 1868, December 1870

[7] TC P 373.9946 HOB; Statistics of Tasmania 1885 p. 329

Nearly half (42%) these 72 girls attended ten smaller schools of the traditional type, seminaries for young ladies, proving that these at least offered secondary education. Six of the girls, however, were daughters of the schools' owners, often the only girl from the school to gain a degree, so probably gained special tuition. These schools dominated results until 1881 and Mrs Reynolds, the most successful teacher, had thirteen passes. Newer college-type schools had 26 passes, with 20 going to the Hobart Ladies' College and one to a convent. Eight girls were educated privately, one by a woman who had gained an AA degree herself, though private study ceased after 1876. The education of six girls cannot be ascertained, though four learned from the headmaster of a boys' school, who possibly gave special classes. No candidates came from state schools and the percentage of girls from private schools who sat for the examination was tiny.

Results of the examinations show that girls performed better in traditional subjects. No subject was compulsory nor was any number of subjects compulsory; candidates' marks were added and if they gained sufficient they were awarded the degree. The pass mark was lower for girls than boys. From 1872-1892, of the 72 girls passing the degree, 31% gained first-class passes, 19% second-class, and 50% third-class. At the same time 164 boys passed, so girls formed 25.5% of the total. Girls gained 18% of the first-class passes, 24% of the second and 47% of the third, so not only did fewer girls sit for the examination, they performed less well than boys.

All female graduates sat for English and French, and languages were popular; 79% sat for German, 58% Italian and 45% Latin. Mathematics was almost universally attempted, by 90%. Drawing (39%) and Music (37%), traditional girls' accomplishments, were moderately popular, but science was not, with Geology tried by 13%, and Chemistry, Zoology and Botany (one subject), and 'Philosophy' (a mixture of Mathematics and Physics) all by 3%. Traditional girls' accomplishments, therefore, dominated girls' studies. Girls also performed better in these areas; the failure rate for English and French was nil, for German 2%, Italian 8%, Drawing 8% and Music 13%. It leaped to 23% for Mathematics and 34.5% for Latin. The credit rate was also higher in traditional subjects; 52% in Music, 47% in French, 44% in English, 29% in German and Drawing and 25% in Italian, but 16% in Mathematics and 3.5% in Latin. The few girls who studied Science did well, but on the whole girls performed much better in traditional subjects, which were probably better taught. In turn, these girls were best able to teach these subjects.

Change to girls' education came rapidly in the period 1887-1895, when six large new private schools (and several smaller ones) were established.[1] They provided a full secondary

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[1] Friends' School, 1887 (W. Oats *The Rose and the Waratah* the School, Hobart, 1979); Methodist Ladies' College, Launceston, 1886 (*Statistics of Tasmania* 1895 p. 294); Presbyterian Ladies' College, Hobart, 1888-1894, the only college which failed (*Statistics of Tasmania* 1893 p. 388, no figures provided for

education with increasing emphasis on mathematics and science, and organised sport; they employed more qualified teachers; they were often run by religious bodies and thus offered more stability; and they often ascribed to new educational theories. The older accomplishments declined in importance and schools began to prepare girls for careers, mainly by encouraging entrance for public examinations which qualified girls for university study. Some schools were co-educational and in these schools in particular girls received the same education as boys. Many smaller private schools, however, changed little, especially private primary schools, and there was still a Seminary for Young Ladies in Hobart in 1914.[1] There was some antipathy to change; though in 1889 the *Tasmanian Mail* was relieved that the 'showy accomplishments' which had been 'the end and aim of girls' education' were replaced by a more thorough and practical education, in 1891 it warned that girls must not be overeducated, that home duties were most important, and the *Church News* reminded readers that woman's kingdom was the home and girls should learn how to entertain their fathers and brothers: 'we are sacrificing too much to book-learning'.[2] Even Ida McAulay, one of the more progressive Tasmanian women, said girls should be educated in the duties of motherhood, learning sex education, First Aid and nursing, domestic economy and cooking.[3] Such sentiment (though probably widespread) had little effect on school curriculums, as public examinations with their academic emphasis came to dominate boys' and girls' education.

New educational theories were put into practice in government schools from 1906, with better teacher training to higher standards of teaching, less rote learning and more learning by experiment, more manual subjects and physical education, and a growing emphasis given to academic standards.[4] Girls' manual subject was still needlework, but less

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1894); Girls' High School, 1892 (A. Alexander 'The Girls' High School' in THRA *Papers and Proceedings* vol 30, no 3, pp. 112-125); Collegiate School, 1892 (*A Valiant Victorian* Community of the Sisters of the Church, London, 1964); Queen's College, co-educational in 1895 (*Statistics of Tasmania* 1895 p. 294). As well, two older schools, St Mary's Convent and Broadlands House, developed into college-type schools (*Statistics of Tasmania* 1902 pp. 441-442). Smaller secondary schools in the country included the Girls' High School in Devonport (1893-c. 1914), Maitland House in Ulverstone (1894-c.1901), St Hilda's in Deloraine (1907-1940s); these were all included in lists of superior colleges in annual *Statistics of Tasmania* e.g. 1902 pp. 441-442

[1] *Tasmanian Government Gazette* 25 August 1914 p. 156

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 21 September 1889, 18 April 1891; *Church News* April 1891, p. 437

[3] NS 331/8, 'Some thoughts on education' by Ida McAulay, a paper read to the Itinerants Society on 29 July 1903

[4] Education Department annual reports, 1906-1914, in *Journals and Papers of Parliament*

time was given to it than formerly;[1] some cookery lessons were also given.[2] The state began to provide secondary education; in 1906 the Teachers' Training College provided this for trainee teachers,[3] and in 1913 High Schools were established, offering all who could pass the qualifying examination full secondary education. Five vocational courses were offered, including a domestic course in which few girls enrolled,[4] indicating that the long-lived stereotype of girls' education preparing girls for a domestic role was to some extent imposed on girls. Girls themselves chose the commercial, teaching and university courses, although half at least returned home after completing their education and took up no career.[5] Further secondary education was provided by the provision of Grade Seven in larger primary schools, which educated children to Junior Public level.[6] Comparatively few girls, however, gained any secondary education: in 1914 only 3% of girls in government schools were in secondary areas.[7] Most still received only a basic primary education, though this was probably of a higher standard than before 1906. Moreover, the period 1906-1914 saw the beginning of changes which were to culminate in the provision of secondary education for all girls.

The results of public examinations show the changes which had taken place in girls' education.[8] These examinations, the Junior and Senior Public, were established in the early 1890s to replace the Associate of Arts and were taken in mid-secondary school and at the end of secondary school. In both the percentage of girls passing remained at about 40%, though it was higher at first in the Junior Public. Girls performed at much the same level as boys in both examinations. Girls from the eight large colleges dominated until about 1908, when state school girls entered in large numbers, and by 1914 the latter obtained more than half the passes in both examinations, a remarkable growth in a few years. There were also some candidates from smaller private schools, convents and governesses.

Candidates for the Junior Public had to be aged at least twelve and take five subjects: two from English, History and Geography; a language; Arithmetic; and one other. In 1902

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[1] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1903 paper 21, p. 10

[2] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1904 paper 43, p. 9 ('the husband of the future will care very little whether his wife can extract a square or cube root, if she shows herself to be a competent and careful cook'); 1914 paper 4, p. 7

[3] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1907 paper 10, pp. 6-7, and subsequent Education Department reports

[4] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1914 paper 4, p. 6;1915 paper 4, p. 5

[5] *The Log: Jubilee Issue 1913-1973* TC P 373.94661 HOB p. 21

[6] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1911 paper 9, p. 2

[7] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1915 paper 4, pp. 5, 23

[8] I am grateful to Miss Shirley King, University of Tasmania Archives, for her assistance in providing and discussing these results

English, Arithmetic and a language were made compulsory, and in 1911 the compulsory language was dropped. Originally subjects examined were those listed above plus Science, Algebra, Geometry, Drawing, Shorthand and Music; later Science was sub-divided. Results were given in three grades.

The percentage of passes gained by girls fluctuated, from 28% in 1911 to 58% in 1902, but overall it slowly declined from 1898 to 1914, averaging 44% from 1891-1901 and 36% from 1911-1914. Numbers rose little until 1911, when they rose considerably with candidates from new state secondary schools and Grade Seven classes. The total number, however, remained small; the majority of girls completed primary school only and did not contemplate entering the examination. An average of 52% of girl candidates passed the examination, much the same figure as for boys, which indicates that girls were educated at a similar level.

The largest number of girls came from the eight colleges in Hobart and Launceston: 68% in 1898, which remained constant until 1909. These candidates had a high pass rate; in 1906, for example, they formed 47% of candidates and gained 66% of passes. In 1910, however, these schools entered 25% of candidates and gained 26% of passes, and from this date their performance was similar to other schools'. These schools entered candidates every year, used results as advertisements and geared their curriculum round the examination syllabuses.

Smaller private schools had far fewer candidates. Girls came from 50 different small private schools, most of which only entered candidates sporadically, possibly only the occasional outstanding girl. Half the schools were situated in the country. Most private schools never entered candidates for the examination. Some candidates came from Catholic schools, at first only from the two city convents, but by 1914 from seventeen other country convents of the 25 which existed. They averaged 17% of candidates and 14% of passes.

At first few state school pupils sat for the Junior Public, though every year a few did so (possibly they were pupil-teachers). Until 1910, 45 state schools entered 151 girls, an average of 3 per school over 13 years. Only 42 passed, a much lower figure than for private schools, though possibly fewer candidates sat for adequate subjects to pass (few if any state primary schools, for example, taught a language). From 1911 the number of candidates rose considerably, as the state provided secondary education, and by 1914, 54% of passes were obtained by state school girls, a remarkable rise. A small number of candidates received 'private education', an average of three per years (though the number jumped to fourteen from 1910-1912, for no apparent reason). These girls' pass rate was very low.

Subjects taken by girls at the Junior Public show that by 1914 girls were studying much the same curriculum as boys, a change from the earlier period when girls' education was largely confined to the traditional female subjects of English, languages and

accomplishments. Published results show passes only, but university records show all subjects attempted from 1902. Results from 1902, 1908 and 1914 have been analysed.

English and Arithmetic were compulsory for all those wishing to pass overall, and at least 94% of girls sat for them. Algebra was studied by an increasing number of girls; 55% in 1902, 76% in 1914. Fewer girls took Geometry; 35% in 1902, 31% in 1914. A higher percentage of boys always took these subjects. History and geography were seen as an integral part of education and were studied by most students of both sexes, at least 86% in all years.

In 1898 only seven girls out of a total of 50 passed Science, and all came from one school, the Methodist Ladies' College. The next year eight girls from six schools passed, and schools included West Devonport State School and two small country private schools. Only fourteen boys passed Science. In 1902 girls formed 46% of Science candidates, and 26% of girls passed. In 1904 the subject was divided; few candidates took Inorganic Science and except for one, all girls came from co-educational schools, so Inorganic Science was probably not taught in all-girls' schools. In 1908, 13% of girls took Inorganic Science and 40% Organic Science (forming 47% of all Organic Science candidates). Many more schools of all types now taught science. Further division in 1911 created five science subjects. Physics was not widely studied by either sex and in 1914 the 6% of girls who took it formed 29% of Physics candidates. These girls came from Hobart High School and Friends. Chemistry was taken by 16% of girls, again from co-educational schools. Botany was taken by few candidates, though the 7% of girls who took if formed 87% of candidates. They came largely from all-girls' schools. The most widely-studied science subjects for girls were Physiology, taken by 41% of girls in 1914, and Physiography (Biology), with 27%. In all, in 1914, 76% of girls studied at least one science subject, though girls took the more 'feminine' sciences. Physics and Chemistry were not generally taught at all-girls' schools, and though they were available at co-educational schools, few girls studied them.

In contrast to the sciences, languages saw a decline. All girls who passed the Junior Public from 1891 to 1895 passed French, and most German and Latin as well. Numbers passing in Latin dropped to less than half in 1899 and German saw a similar decline, while not all girls studied French. By 1902 only 75% of girls sat for a language, partly because more female candidates now came from state schools and country convents, where languages were not taught. As a language was compulsory for an overall pass, students from these schools were unable to gain the qualification. By 1908, however, more schools taught a language and 81% of girls sat for one. Much of the increase came in Latin, often the language introduced into state and convent schools.

In 1911 the compulsory language was dropped and by 1914 only 60% of female candidates sat for a language. The main language, for both sexes, was French; 57% of girls took this and 23% Latin. In both boys out numbered girls. German was predominantly

studied by girls who formed 95% of candidates, though only 11% of girls studied it, and they came from five all-girls' schools. Italian, introduced in 1902, attracted few candidates and these mainly came from one exclusive girls' school which specialised in languages. This school was short-lived, a measure of how girls' education had changed. German and Italian were seen as second and third languages, but by 1914 the idea of a girls' education as consisting largely of languages had died out, only lingering in the few exclusive girls' schools. A very few girls studied Greek in this period.

Drawing, consisting more of geometrical drawing than the sketching formerly studied by young ladies, was not widely taken and most candidates were boys. In 1902, 11% of girls took it, and in 1914, 19%. The increase was mainly due to the subject being taught in state schools, especially high schools, which also taught shorthand. For years there was no female shorthand candidate, but from 1910 a small number took it; in 1914 there were 48 candidates, 28 of whom were girls. All but one came from state schools. Shorthand was the only vocational subject, and the lack of interest in it indicates the desire for a general education rather than a vocational one. Music was examined and in 1898 was taken by eleven girls, but from 1900 few took it, none in most years.

The period 1891-1914 therefore saw changes in girls' subjects. English, Arithmetic, History, and Geography were taken by the majority of both boys and girls. Extra languages and music, traditional girls' subjects, declined; science, algebra and to a lesser extent shorthand were more widely studied. More choices were available to girls, especially when the new state high schools were established. Girls' at all-girls' private schools were confined to a more narrow curriculum with multiple languages and 'ladylike' sciences; several of these schools were 'weak' in Mathematics.[1] Girls from these schools and co-educational private schools dominated the Junior Public numerically until 1910, when the establishment of state high schools and the introduction of Grade Seven into primary schools meant a greatly increased number of candidates from state schools. Change, then, came in the private co-educational schools and then in the state system, but even in all-girls' schools some change took place. One result shows the change in girls' education. In a result unthinkable twenty or even ten years earlier, when almost no state school girls entered the Junior Public and almost no girls took science, Beryl Harris, from West Zeehan State School, gained her Junior Public in 1911 with passes in English, Geography, Arithmetic (credit), Algebra, Physiography, Botany and Physiology.

Pass rates varied from subject to subject and year to year. In 1902 girls had a similar pass rate to boys in most subjects, although boys performed better in Geometry, Science and Drawing, and girls did better at Latin. In 1908 girls gained comparatively more passes in

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[1] For example, the Girls' High School (A. Alexander 'The Girls' High School' in THRA *Papers and Proceedings* vol 30, no 3, p. 118)

French and German, Geometry and Organic Science; in 1914 in Physics. Overall, however, girls and boys had a comparable pass rate. For both, the percentage of passes was slightly lower overall in 1914 than in 1902, possibly a consequence of the increased numbers sitting for the examination; no longer were the candidates only the cream of their schools.

The percentage of students gaining credits also varied. In 1902 girls gained a higher percentage of credits in French and boys in Mathematics, Science and Drawing. This was also the case in 1908, though girls also gained more credits in Inorganic Science, English and History; boys dominated in Geography and Latin. By 1914 these differences had levelled out, though girls gained a higher percentage of credits in Chemistry and English, and boys in Latin and Arithmetic. Arithmetic was the only subject where boys consistently performed better than girls. Overall both pass and credit rates show comparable achievement by boys and girls with no consistently large differences in any area except Arithmetic.

The 1901 census gave, in the age group 10-15 (meaning 10-14 in fact), 10,649 male and 10,487 females, approximately 2,100 of each sex per year. In 1902, 140 girls sat for the Junior Public, or 6.6% of the age group; 3.4% passed. This was an atypical year as there were more female candidates than male; 105 males, 5% of the age group, sat for the examination. The following year approximately 100 females, 4.8% of the age group, were candidates and only 1.9% passed. Even in 1914, when numbers had risen considerably due to a greater number of state school candidates, only 9% of girls of the age group sat for the examination. The conclusions drawn above therefore refer to only a very small percentage of girls. Other girls presumably studied a similar but modified syllabus: English, Arithmetic, History, Geography, possibly a language, possibly elementary science. Possibly, as well, they learned needlework and music, perhaps drawing.

Overall, the results of the Junior Public examination indicate that by 1914 girls were studying much the same subjects as boys and performing at much the same level. Consistently fewer girls than boys sat for the examination, however, implying that education was more valued for boys than girls; the proportion of girls dropped slightly. The change from traditional girls' subjects to a curriculum similar to that taught to boys was initiated in co-educational private schools and later state schools, when these entered the secondary arena.

The Senior Public examination was taken at the end of secondary school. Candidates had to be fifteen or over, and the average age was seventeen. To gain an overall pass, candidates had to pass five subjects, including English, Arithmetic, a Mathematics/Science subject and a language. There was a ten-subject and three-language maximum. Passes were given in three grades until 1913, when one grade only was given.

The number of candidates was less than for the Junior Public, approximately one-third. Total numbers of candidates were only provided from 1902. The number rose from an average of 86 in 1902-1908, to 147 from 1911-1914. The percentage of girls varied

considerably but averaged 40, with no sustained changes. The number of female candidates therefore rose at a similar level to the number of boys. In fact, for both sexes, the real number of candidates was less, as many repeated the examination to obtain a better result. From 1898-1914, 40% of those who passed the examination were girls, so girls performed at much the same level as boys. The percentage of female candidates who passed fluctuated so greatly (69% in 1908 and 27% in 1911 are extremes) that no firm conclusions can be drawn: it averaged 46%.

The actual number of girls passing was small, and barely increased. It averaged seventeen from 1898-1914, and the 1914 figure was nineteen. In 1901 there were approximately 1800 girls aged seventeen in Tasmania, and 29 female candidates in the Senior Public; thus 1.6% of the age group entered for the examination, and 1% passed. By 1911 there were 1952 girls aged seventeen; 3% sat and .8% passed. So, though there was a slight rise in the percentage of girls sitting for the examination, still only a very small percentage did so, and the percentage passing even dropped.

As with the Junior Public, candidates came from five groups of schools. The eight large examination-oriented private schools dominated, especially until 1906. From 1894-1905 these schools gained 85% of passes from 68% of candidates, so not only did these schools provide far more candidates than any other group but these candidates performed better. From 1906-1914 these schools lost their predominant position somewhat as more candidates came from state schools; they fielded an average of 39% of candidates and gained 55% of passes.

Other private schools, including some short-lived colleges, provided few candidates, only 37 from 1899-1914. Nine passed: four from Hobart schools, two from Launceston and two from the country, while eleven of the 28 who failed came from country schools. Catholic schools also provided few candidates, only 20: 13 passed, and most came from St Mary's College in Hobart, a school which had become similar to the eight large colleges. Country convents, like country private schools, did not generally aim to educate girls to Senior Public level, and those who tried were not particularly successful. The total number of female candidates from country schools from 1899-1914 was seventeen, of whom only four passed.

At first no candidates entered the Senior Public from state schools. In 1895 one girl sat for one subject, but the first to attempt to pass overall came from the Franklin State School in 1900, and passed. There were no further state school candidates until 1906, when five girls from the newly-established Teachers' Training College entered; two passed, and a female candidate from Zeehan State School also passed. From 1906, candidates from the Training College increased in numbers and performance, until in 1913 they formed 50% of candidates and gained 54.5% of passes.

Meanwhile only the very occasional pupil from the rest of the state system entered for the examination: after the two in 1900 and 1906, there were one in 1907 and 2 in 1909, of whom three passed. State primary schools were not intended to educate children to this standard, and these five girls must have been exceptional candidates who received special coaching from the occasional outstanding and enthusiastic teacher (most teachers had not reached Senior Public level themselves). Three of these state school girls came from country schools, giving a total of 20 country girls entering for the Senior Public, with six passes.

Some girls, 12%, did not state where they received their education; possibly from a governess, possibly private coaching for subjects failed the previous year. This group of girls received only 4% of passes, though many had only entered for a few subjects and could not aim to pass.

The only institutions to provide girls consistently with a full secondary education were therefore the eight private colleges and St Mary's College, and, from 1906, the Teachers' Training College. To achieve secondary education, girls had to come from families wealthy enough to afford the fees at the former institutions, or perform sufficiently well at primary school to be accepted into the Training College. This frequently meant leaving home, and girls had to become teachers. Most girls had no chance of a full secondary education; change was approaching with the establishment of state high schools in 1913, but their students had not reached Senior Public level by 1914.

As with the Junior Public, English was compulsory and was taken by at least 87% of candidates each year, presumably those aiming at gaining an overall pass. History was widely studied by both sexes, with an average of 85% of candidates. Geography, however, dropped in popularity, from 81% of female candidates in 1905 to 61% from 1911-1914, possibly because of a low pass rate from 1906.

A language was compulsory, and in 1902, 80% of all candidates studied French, 55% Latin and 23% German. By 1914 French had dropped below 50%, Latin remained at the same level and German dropped to 5%. As in the Junior Public, Latin was often taught in state schools and convents but French was not, hence the drop in French numbers. In 1902 girls predominated in French and boys in Latin; by 1914 more girls did Latin as Latin was taught at the Training College. The percentage of girls studying French dropped from 84 in 1902 to 33 in 1914; Latin rose slightly from 45% in 1902 to an average of 59% in 1911-1914. German was almost entirely confined to girls for the entire period, though the percentage studying it dropped markedly. Many girls still studied two languages, 47% until 1907, then 24% from 1908-1914 as numbers from the Training College increased. Greek was studied by a small number of boys and one girl; Italian also had one female candidate. Overall the number of girls studying a language fell only slightly, as it was compulsory for a pass, but the major language changed from French to Latin, and the percentage studying two or more languages dropped considerably.

Arithmetic was also compulsory, but Algebra was almost as widely studied by both sexes, especially from 1911-1914 when 86% of girls sat for it. Geometry was widely studied by boys, less so by girls, an average of 49%. Trigonometry, taken by 16% of girls in 1902, fell to 3% in later years, and was more studied by boys. Statics and Applied Mathematics were only taken by a handful of girls and a few more boys.

A Science subject was not compulsory, but the percentage of girls taking one grew considerably, from 24% in 1902 to over 50% in 1909 and 64% in 1913. It dropped to 24% in 1914, largely because no girls from the Training College took any science subject after a disastrous year in 1913, when out of 23 female candidates, 22 failed in science. There were five science subjects. Virtually no girls did Physics (taken by a few boys) or Botany (taken by almost no candidates). The percentage of girls studying Chemistry varied widely, from 2% in 1914 to 38% in 1908; the average was 17%. Geology was the science most widely taken by girls, especially from 1907-1913 when 31% percentage of girls studied it. Physiology and Hygiene (one subject) was studied by 11% of girls and very few boys. At first female science candidates came mainly from co-educational private schools, but in 1905 all-girls private schools began teaching science, mainly Geology and Physiology and Hygiene. All science subjects were taught at the Training College and in 1911, for example, 61% of female science candidates came from there. No girls from Catholic schools did science subjects, but in other schools studying a science was usual by 1914.

Drawing was also taught at the Training College and when its students began to enter for the Senior Public, the number of Drawing candidates increased greatly, from an average of 12% from 1902-1907, to 40% from 1908-1914. Girls averaged 58% of Drawing candidates. Very few girls took Shorthand or Music, or the new subjects of Elementary Politics or Ancient History.

Subjects studied at Senior Public level show that girls still took traditional girls' subjects to a greater extent than at Junior public level. Most students of both sexes studied English, History, Arithmetic, Algebra and a language; some did Geography. Many girls, especially from all-girls' schools, studied multiple languages. Mathematics subjects other than Arithmetic and Algebra were dominated by boys, as were more science subjects. While most female candidates came from private schools, girls generally studied traditional subjects; with the broadening of the state system to include secondary education, the emphasis swung away from languages and girls studied more mathematics, science and drawing.

The pass rate varied enormously from year to year and subject to subject. Girls passed most consistently in French (83%) and German (84%), slightly less well in English (71%, though the figure dropped slowly from 1902-1913), History (69%) and Latin (73%). From 1904 results in Geography were poor, with an average pass rate of 46%. In Arithmetic girls performed well, with an average of 76% passing, but they had less success

in Algebra (58%) and Geometry, which fluctuated a good deal and had a pass rate as low as 31%. The few candidates for Trigonometry, Statics and Physics did well; Chemistry and Geology varied enormously: Geometry ranged from 89% to 5%. Drawing had an average pass rate of 67%.

Girls performed best, therefore, in the traditional girls' subjects and less well in subjects considered masculine, Algebra, Geometry and Science. Girls did well in subjects where there were very few female candidates, probably because only outstanding girls studied these subjects. It is difficult to generalise about changes in the overall pass rate, but there was a tendency for pass rates to drop after 1903, and it would appear that, as at the university, the interest taken by girls in higher education in the 1890s did not increase thereafter. Despite a higher number of girls in the age group, numbers sitting for the examination grew very little and the percentage passing dropped. Rising numbers of candidates from 1911 were due to increasing numbers from the state sector as this provided girls with secondary education, rather than to renewed interest in gaining the qualification among girls generally.

These examinations affected only a very small percentage of girls. In 1902, 7% of the age group sat for the Junior Public and 3% passed; in the Senior Public 2% of the age group sat. Even in 1914 when numbers had risen, only 9% sat for the Junior Public and 3% for the Senior. Nevertheless, changes in curriculum would have affected many more girls. By 1914 the two systems of education, state and private, had moved closer together, as state school girls received academic education of a higher standard, and those at private schools also received a more academic education with less emphasis on accomplishments.

Although by 1914 some girls were taking up careers on leaving school, there was little provision for this in either system, other than encouraging students to sit for public examinations as a general qualification. Schools aimed to provide a general education and training took place afterwards, if a career was desired; most girls were still assumed to be future wives and mothers, as indeed most became. The exception was the teacher training provided by the pupil-teacher system from the 1850s and vocational courses in high schools from 1913.

It is difficult to estimate how many girls took up a career on leaving school; some did, but many returned home to 'help mother', either in theory or fact, before marrying, and marriage was still the expected fate of most girls.[1] The changes which took place in girls' education, therefore, were not due to pressure from girls and their families for better preparation for careers. Rather they seem to have stemmed from an acceptance of the idea

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[1] 'Neither my father nor my teachers took any interest in my career. I was given no encouragement to pursue higher studies. The only options available seemed to be teaching, nursing or marriage. The whole social climate was directed towards marriage' (*The Log, Jubilee Issue 1913-1975* TC P 373.94661 HOB p. 21)

that girls needed a better, preferably secondary, education to fit them for life in general, to develop them so they could function best in an increasingly educated society. Progressive thought also saw educated women as better wives and mothers, raising superior children. Improvement in state schools was brought about by men who believed that a cultivated man was a good man; this belief applied to women also. There was never any suggestion that girls not share in any educational advantages made and they benefited equally with boys as, gradually, a wider and higher standard education was offered by both state and private schools.

Further education was available for women at the University of Tasmania, which began classes in 1892 and enrolled its first female student in 1893. By 1896 women formed 32% of students; the university was struggling to survive and might well have foundered but for the female students. From 1893 to 1914, 115 women studied at the university and passed at least one subject.[1] Just over half, 51%, completed a degree; 20% continued to obtain a Master's degree; and 27% of students gaining degrees were women. From 1893 to 1906 students were mainly girls from private schools.[2] Parental occupations included businessmen, teachers, an architect, an accountant, a hotelkeeper, a clergyman, a butcher and a grocer, so students were more from the middle classes than the social elite. Five girls had attended government primary schools and won Exhibitions to private secondary schools,[3] but their backgrounds are unknown. Most students, 69%, studied traditional feminine subjects of English, languages and history; 85% studied Arts, 13 % Science and one woman studied Law. At least 67% became teachers with some having distinguished careers (for example Miss Mary Fox, headmistress of the Methodist Ladies' College from 1903, when she was 26, to 1941[4]); many did not marry, so a university degree then senior teaching provided a satisfying alternative to marriage. The careers of the other 33% are unknown; though one became a hotel manager[5]; however, clearly the only career in which a degree had any value was teaching, and even Science graduates became teachers.[6]

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[1] UTA, university degree examination results, 1893-1914; university calendars, 1893-1914

[2] UTA, Senior Public examination results, 1890-1906

[3] Exhibitions Examinations results in parliamentary papers, 1872-1892

[4] *Mercury* 1 September 1962; TC P 373.94661 MET. Other well-known teachers were Edith Hurst, Vice-Principal of the Training College; Pearl Walter, Isabella Mather and Agnes Kennedy, all of whom ran their own schools; and Merle Weaver, an ardent believer in women's rights

[5] Mabel Huston of Launceston, whose family owned hotels

[6] For example Amy Elliott of Friends, who returned there to teach (Oats p. 88, and see photograph of the staff, 1892, between pp. 100-101)

From 1907 to 1914 more women attended the university; 67 passed at least one subject.[1] The increase came because some Teachers' Training College students attended classes, though did not expect to gain degrees. These women formed 55% of female students, and had mostly come from state schools. Subjects studied changed; fewer women studied Science (6%) and none Law, while English, languages and history also accounted for fewer students (52%). Other Arts subjects became more popular, especially Education, Logic, Ethics and Psychology, useful for College students. Only 33% of students obtained degrees, though many of course had no chance of doing so; six College students did, however, complete degrees after leaving College. Even so, performance levels dropped; no Science students completed degrees, and of 21 students from private schools, only 13 completed degrees, a lower percentage than before 1906 and much lower than the period 1893-1900, when 87% of students obtained degrees. Fewer students also gained higher degrees. Possibly this was a reaction after the highly-motivated pioneers of the 1890s; possibly the economic climate of the 1900s, far more prosperous than the 1890s, meant there was less need for girls to train for a career, though as teaching did not need a university degree this argument is tenuous. Surprisingly, the advent of Mary Fox MA as headmistress of the Methodist Ladies' College resulted in only one girl from the school attending university from 1903, so university-trained women did not necessarily influence their pupils to further education. No firm conclusions can be drawn, but certainly after the initial progress of the 1890s women's university education progressed little. As in the earlier period, at least 70% of students became teachers; some wealthier girls saw the university as a sort of superior finishing school,[2] perhaps a welcome alternative to the round of entertainments which academically-minded women could well have found unsatisfying. Despite the decline in the number of full-time students and in women's performance, however, the period saw the general acceptance of women attending university; by 1914 it was quite usual for the most intellectual girls to do so.

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[1] UTA, university degree examination results, 1906-1914, and Senior Public examination results, 1903-1914

[2] Christine Walch, the daughter of a clergyman, went for a trip to Europe after university and had no apparent intention of using her degree (Interview with Dr Christine Walch, Summerhome Moonah, 23 May 1980)

Women's Legal Position

In Britain, America and Australian, a number of reforms improved women's legal position from the 1850s onwards. Tasmania gained these reforms at much the same time as other places,[1] but not because of action by women themselves, as was often the case elsewhere. Laws were usually passed to bring the colony into line with British law, and time and again legislators introduced bills as transcripts of British law.[2] As one parliamentarian said, 'he felt that on the whole their legislation should be as nearly as possible identical in a matter of that kind [Married Women's Property Act] with the law of the Mother Country'.[3] The fact that a law had been passed in Britain was treated as a strong point in favour of passing it in Tasmania,[4] and conversely, it if had not been passed this was an argument against it.[5] On several occasions laws about which there had been considerable discussion in Britain passed with virtually no debate in Tasmania.[6] Tasmanian women therefore benefited from the battles of British women, with the advantage that the lack of need for a struggle in Tasmania meant no antagonism was aroused. To a lesser extent mainland colonies' laws were copied, though their right to 'dictate' to Tasmania was questioned.[7] There were few Tasmanian innovations.

A further factor in the ease of passing laws was the willingness of many politicians to pass laws seen as fair to women, and when laws were opposed it was generally on other grounds than opposition to women's rights per se. Braddon, for example, supported 'any measure which proposed to raise the state of women and her position': what was just for men was just for women.[8] Giblin said 'the time had come when married women should be treated more justly'.[9] Women's reforms also gained much support from men in the community.[10] There was some opposition, especially in the Legislative Council and especially with laws lessening men's control of money and of parliament, and some laws

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[1] The timing of Tasmania's reforms with those of other colonies can be seen in Michael Bosworth 'Protection or Abuse: select list of discriminatory laws' in Judy Mackinolty and Heather Radi (eds) *In pursuit of justice: Australian women and the law 1788-1979* Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp. 242-257

[2] For example, *Mercury* 30 July 1864, 2 July 1873, 29 October 1881, 31 July 1873

[3] *Mercury* 4 October 1883

[4] For example, *Mercury* 9 July 1873, 13 August 1885

[5] *Mercury* 2, 4 July 1873, 25 October 1890

[6] For example, the 1874 Custody of Children Act, about which there was 'much discussion' in England, was carried in Tasmania with no amendments and virtually no debate (*Mercury* 31 July 1874)

[7] *Mercury* 11 July 1873

[8] *Mercury* 9 August 1882

[9] *Mercury* 2 July 1873, 13 August 1874

[10] For example, over the age of consent and the suffrage

were delayed: one law, enabling wives to give evidence against their husbands in desertion cases, was seen by a Councillor as 'hysterically in favour of women', though it was eventually passed.[1]

Several laws affecting women were passed in the 1830s; conveyances by married women were made effectual and from 1837 deserted wives could claim support from husbands, though this law was passed more because the state was reluctant to support deserted wives than from humanitarian motives, and was later described as 'utterly ineffectual'.[2] It was, however, the first law of its type passed in Australia. In 1858 married women were allowed the minor right of disposing of reversionary interests in personal estate.[3]

In 1857 the Secretary of State for the Colonies recommended that colonial governments copy British legislation which established civil courts to deal with divorce and judicial separation, to introduce uniformity in the Empire.[4] The Tasmanian Government passed the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1860, allowing husband and wife to obtain a decree for separation on the same grounds (adultery, cruelty, desertion) and for divorce on the grounds of adultery by the wife and aggravated adultery (by other acts such as rape) by the husband. As this was similar to British law there was little discussion about it in parliament; some clergy presented a petition against it but no reaction by women was noted.[5]

The government of C.J. Whyte brought in various bills which affected women. In 1862 the age of consent was raised from ten (under common law) to twelve and the Deserted Wives and Children Act was improved in 1863.[6] The Matrimonial Causes Act was amended on British lines in 1864, assisting women to gain maintenance.[7] Two years later a Married Women's Disposal of Money bill failed to pass, however.[8] There was little reported discussion in parliament or the community about these issues.

A further series of acts improving women's legal position considerably followed in 1873-1874 under the well-known philanthropist premier, Alfred Kennerley. Following British law, the Deserted Wives and Children's Act was again amended, women were given

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[1] *Mercury* 15 October 1898

[2] 4 William IV no 13; 8 William IV no 9; *Mercury* 1 July 1863

[3] 21 Vict no 42

[4] Hilary Golder *Divorce in 19th century New South Wales* New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1985, p. 8; Helen Jones *In her own name: Women in South Australian History* Wakefield Press, Netley, 1986 p. 8

[5] 24 Vict no 1; *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1860: list of petitions presented to parliament

[6] 27 Vict no 5; 27 Vict no 14

[7] 28 Vict no 4; *Mercury* 30 July 1864

[8] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1866: summary of bills

the right to custody of or access to children under sixteen,[1] and the Matrimonial Causes Act was again amended so courts could make husbands pay wives an allowance, and, a Tasmanian innovation, desertion by the husband could include cruelty which forced a woman to leave her husband. The Attorney-General, Giblin, said he had seen many such cases. Laws were made by men, he said, who took care to protect themselves; there was a great difference in the way the law treated misconduct by men and women, and this act improved women's position. Even the conservative *Mercury* was in favour of it.[2] A Married Women's Property Bill was introduced; strenuous efforts had been made to pass it in England, said its promoters, and it would develop a spirit of reliance and self respect among women, providing settlements for the poor as well as the rich and treating married women more justly. It was thrown out, largely because it was felt to allow opportunities for fraud,[3] and a clause to protect a wife's earnings, included in the Matrimonial Causes amendment, was also thrown out when parliamentarians realised it meant a dressmaker wife could keep her own earnings.[4] Despite this activity in parliament, there appeared little interest in these developments in the community.

Interest was aroused by the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, which was also heatedly debated in England and on the mainland. It was introduced in Tasmania in 1872, was delayed, and finally became law in 1874,[5] much faster than in Britain and, for example, South Australia, where parliament introduced five such bills between 1857 and 1871.[6] Even though it increased, albeit slightly, women's rights, 285 women signed a petition against it. Other petitions came from Anglican clergy.[7] The petition from women, 'mostly old maids...moving in that sphere of life which did not give their protest much importance',[8] was ignored. Parliamentary interest in improving women's legal position now lapsed for some years.

As noted earlier, in 1879 due to urging from the British Navy the Contagious Diseases Act was passed, though it was shorn of some of the more 'objectionable' British clauses.[9] This law brought protest from women in Britain but not in Tasmania; when

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[1] 37 Vict no 14; *Mercury* 9 July 1873; 38 Vict no 8; *Mercury* 31 July, 13 August 1874

[2] 38 Vict no 13; *Mercury* 13, 15, 26 August 1874

[3] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1873: summary of bills; *Mercury* 2 July 1873

[4] *Mercury* 13, 15, 26 August 1874

[5] 37 Vict no 7; *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1872-1874: summaries of bills; *Mercury* 20 December 1872, 4, 5, 11 July 1873

[6] Jones pp. 18-20 (and see Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*)

[7] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1873: list of petitions presented to parliament

[8] *Mercury* 4 July 1873

[9] *Mercury* 10 May 1879; and see section of this thesis entitled 'Prostitution'

pressed by its parent organisation the WCTU presented a petition against the Act in 1895, but it had only one signature.[1]

Giblin's government reintroduced the Married Women's Property Bill; despite following British legislation it failed in 1880 and 1881, and was passed in 1882. A married woman could now own property and was treated as a feme sole.[2] The Act was amended along British lines in 1883 and 1885, and in an original way in 1890, to give greater security to creditors. (In 1890 the opposition's main argument was that there was no such bill in England or anywhere else.)[3]

Two legal issues only stirred a number of women to action. The first was the age of consent. By 1885 this was sixteen in Britain and it was proposed to raise it from twelve in Tasmania. Parliament received 41 petitions asking that it be made sixteen; women were involved in petitions from the Launceston Deserted and Fallen Women's Aid Society (three, with 173, 574 and an unknown number of signatures), the Fathers and Mothers of Hobart (503 signatures), the Launceston Ladies' Prayer Union (54 signatures) and the Hobart Ladies' Christian Association (23 signatures).[4] Despite the evidence of strong community feeling, Parliament thought the awful cases cited in England did not exist in Tasmania where conditions were good; that men had to be protected against designing girls, who matured earlier in Tasmania; and even that clergy were to blame for immorality by allowing girls to walk to and from prayer meetings at night. The Act, providing harsh sentences for carnal knowledge of girls under fourteen and a light sentence if the girl were under fifteen (in which it was sufficient defence to think the girl was over fifteen) was passed late at night when several members were absent.[5] (Other colonies, for example South Australia, raised the age of consent to sixteen at this time.[6]) Letters of protest were written to newspapers - A.J.Taylor said this was a question much taken up by 'men'[7] - but agitation died down and once more interest in women's legal rights lapsed, though in 1887, following British law, the mother was given further rights as her children's guardian.[8]

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[1] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1895: list of petitions presented to parliament; and see section of this thesis entitled 'Temperance'

[2] 46 Vict no 17; *Mercury* 29 October 1881, 4 October 1883; *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1881-1883: summary of bills

[3] 47 Vict no 18; 49 Vict no 6; 54 Vict no 14; *Mercury* 4 October 1883, 30 July, 13 August 1885, 10, 25 October 1890

[4] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1884, 1885: lists of petitions presented to parliament

[5] 49 Vict no 23; *Mercury* 15, 19 August, 22 October 1885

[6] Jones p. 27

[7] *Mercury* 4, 6, 8, 13 October, 3 November 1885

[8] 51 Vict no 5; *Mercury* 23 July 1887

The second issue to cause some controversy was suffrage, which has already been covered in detail.[1] In 1896 and 1898 the WCTU organised large petitions to both houses of parliament in favour of women's suffrage, and an unknown body presented another large petition against it.[2] Female suffrage was thrown out three times by the Legislative Council. Woman now had equal rights of citizenship, guardianship of children, custody, divorce, and property, said Councillors. 'Was she not equal?'[3] After 1898 agitation died down. In 1902, however, women were granted the federal vote and it was seen as logical that this be extended to state elections, so women were enfranchised in 1903 with little discussion or agitation.[4]

Apart from the suffrage, most issues after 1891 dealt with minor matters, as women had gained most rights being contested overseas. In 1898 the Deserted Wives and Children Act was amended so wives could give evidence against husbands; in 1907 the state was to pay for husbands to be extradited from other states.[5] In 1900 married women could enter into contracts.[6] Later a Testator's Family Maintenance Bill enabled a man's family to be maintained by his estate even if he willed it away. This brought two principles into conflict; a wife and children were entitled to support from the husband, but a man had the right to dispose of his own money. The bill was defeated in 1909 and 1910, but passed in 1912.[7] In 1910, with little debate, the age of consent was raised to sixteen to bring Tasmania into line with other states.[8]

By 1914 Tasmanian women had much the same rights, and in some areas more, than British and mainland women, though the divorce law still favoured men (this caused no agitation among Tasmanian women, unlike, for example, New South Wales, where after 'twenty years of conflict' equal divorce rights were implemented in 1881.[9] They had won these rights fairly easily and requested no more, though in 1913 the WCTU did request the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act and the raising of the age of consent to eighteen.[10] Except over the Deceased Wife's Sister Act, women were only active from 1884 to 1898,

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[1] See section of this thesis entitled Efforts to Change Society

[2] *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1896, 1898: lists of petitions presented to parliament

[3] *Mercury* 31 July 1895, 24 September 1896, 3 August, 8 September 1898

[4] 3 Edward VII no 17; *Mercury* 4, 19 September 1902, 17 September 1903

[5] 62 Vict no 46; *Mercury* 28 September, 15 October 1898; 7 Edward VII no 22; *Mercury* 16 October 1907

[6] 64 Vict no 7; *Mercury* 23 August 1900

[7] *Mercury* 17 September, 3 December 1909; 10 December 1910; 3 George V no 7

[8] 1 George V no 4; *Mercury* 5, 11 August 1910

[9] Hilary Golder 'An exercise in unnecessary chivalry: The NSW Matrimonial Causes Act Amendment Act of 1881' in Mackinolty and Radi, p. 42

[10] See section of this thesis entitled 'Temperance'

much the same period which saw activity in other fields, and over only two issues. In both women were assisted by men and agitation died away after defeat, with success coming eventually after a period of little agitation. Apart from these two issues, Tasmanian women showed little interest in legal reform. The weekly women's columns, published from the late 1880s, rarely mentioned women's legal position, except for some comment about the suffrage in the 1890s. No woman emerged to lead Tasmanian women on any legislative issue, and without such a leader (like, for example, Vida Goldstein in Victoria, Rose Scott in New South Wales or Catherine Helen Spence in South Australia[1]) Tasmanian women remained quiet, even in the face of injustices felt keenly elsewhere, like inequitable divorce laws, and the lack of the vote. The small, scattered, conservative population of Tasmania threw up few women interested in such issues and these were too few and isolated to exert much influence.

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[1] See Betty Searle *Silk & Calico: Class, Gender and the Vote* Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1988, and Susan Magarey *Unbridling the Tongues of Women* Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985

Influences and potential influences on Tasmanian women

Though influences on Tasmanian women have been evident in many preceding chapters, it appears necessary to bring these scattered points together to present an overall picture of the various factors which did affect the thinking and behaviour of Tasmanian women. Visitors from outside had an extremely strong influence; women from Britain in particular, but also from the mainland and other countries. British literature was similarly important. Local influences appeared in newspapers and in leading local women.

As Tasmania was a British colony and during the period under discussion retained extremely strong ties with Britain, it was natural that British ideas influenced society and that to a certain extent the community modelled itself on Britain. To reinforce this influence there were a number of women, almost always from Britain, who came temporarily either as visitors or as wives of official dignitaries (particularly governors and bishops). From Eliza Arthur onwards governors' wives were expected to play a minor public role and act as social leaders. They entertained, opened bazaars, attended ceremonies and gave their names to worthy causes. If the governor's wife desired it or felt it her duty, she could take an interest in various women's activities and even initiate some, and expect local women to follow, but until approximately 1890 few did. Eliza Arthur (1824-1836) was extremely busy with her large family, and was content to be a nominal patroness of worthy causes and little more;[1] most governors' wives followed her example, thus reinforcing women's domestic role. Caroline Denison (1847-1854), who attempted to aid prostitutes, Aborigines and orphans, was daunted by the lack of support she received and by her own increasing family, and became a governor's wife similar to Eliza Arthur,[2] and from 1854 to 1888 most governors' wives followed this example. Some, like Mrs Du Cane and Mrs Weld, did little.[3] Some, like Augusta Young, were popular and actively benevolent, but initiated nothing and merely supported existing Tasmanian activity.[4] Mrs Gore-Browne and Lady Lefroy established refuges for prostitutes (a well-known philanthropic activity in Britain) but received little support.[5] Before 1890 only one governor's wife attempted to change Tasmanian habits: Lady Franklin (1836-42), who was appalled at women's ignorance and tried to raise their intellectual standard, by holding conversaziones and lecture evenings, building a museum,

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[1] Alison Alexander *Governors' Ladies* THRA, Hobart, 1987, chapter 8

[2] Alexander chapter 11

[3] Both served in the committee of the Girls' Industrial School but did little else (G3/1/1 December 1874, June 1875)

[4] *Mercury* 22 August 1861

[5] *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* vol 1, p. 220; G3/1/1 October 1867, December 1868; Walch's Almanac 1882 p. 191

and providing them with an example of a well-read articulate woman with varied interests.[1] Lady Franklin was, however, too different from most Tasmanian women to influence them to any great extent: few had her education, her opportunities or her lack of domestic concerns (she had no children, and two nieces to assist her).

Like governors' wives, early bishops' wives generally reinforced the status quo. For example, Anna Maria Nixon found Tasmanian society second-rate but did nothing to try to change it, being much involved in her own family: she did, however, support existing charities, the Dorcas Society and the Girls' Industrial School.[2] One bishop's wife, Mrs Sandford, disliked Tasmania so much she returned to England, and even those who were benevolent worked unostentatiously and influenced other women little.[3]

An early visitor who could have influenced women was Mary Leman Grimstone (1826-1829), who had already published verse and a novel and published more verse in Tasmanian newspapers, as well as a letter criticising Hobart society and Arthur's rule. She published nothing at this time about women but was an example of an intelligent, educated, articulate woman, publicly criticising masculine institutions. Back in England she wrote novels which urged the equality of the sexes and the development of woman's potential:[4] possibly they were read in Tasmania, and possibly also she talked on such themes there. Similarly Caroline Leakey visited Tasmania from 1848 to 1853. She was ill for much of this time and appeared little known, but on her return to England she published the poems written in Tasmania and a novel set there, *The Broad Arrow*.[5] In general, however, women visitors from Britain before 1890 tended to reinforce women's domestic role, and the few like Franklin and Grimstone who held other ideas did not appear to have a great deal of influence, though possibly their independence encouraged Tasmanian women's independence, confined as this was to the domestic sphere.

From the mid-1880s, however, many more avenues brought overseas ideas to Tasmanian women. Governors' and bishops' wives were more forceful and active and a large number of visitors attempted to bring changes; as well, newspapers now ran women's columns which presented ideas to local women and gave publicity to their activities.

Most governors' wives were more active than those in the past, but three were particularly so. Lady Hamilton arrived in Tasmania in 1888. Well-educated, articulate and forceful, she tried to raise the intellectual level of Tasmanian women, establishing reading

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[1] Alexander chapter 9

[2] N. Nixon *The Pioneer Bishop in V.D.L.* the Author, Hobart, 1953, p. 10, passim; *ADB* vol 2, p. 287

[3] *ADB* vol 6, p. 85; *Church News* December 1901 (Mrs Bromby)

[4] Michael Roe 'Mary Leman Grimstone (1800-1850?): for women's rights and Tasmanian patriotism' in THRA *Papers and Proceedings* vol 36, no 1, pp.

[5] M. Giordano and D. Norman *Tasmanian Literary Landmarks* Shearwater Press, Hobart, 1984, chapter 6

and literary societies and a sketching club. Health and sanitation were among her interests and she lectured, published articles and established the Nursing Band. She helped establish the Women's Sanitary Association and assisted the WCTU. She founded the Anchorage Home for unmarried mothers and was on the board of the Ladies' College, to the chagrin of male members.[1] Many people disapproved of her activities but she certainly made them think about women's role, and had many devoted adherents. She arrived in Tasmania at the beginning of the era of rapid change and had considerable influence in awakening women's interest in the possibilities open to them; even those who disliked her sometimes formed or joined other, similar societies to those she established (for example, the Itinerants literary society). She was an active, positive example for Tasmanian women and possibly it was no coincidence that her period in Tasmania saw such a growth in women's activity. When she left there was public lamentation: Lady Hamilton had done so much, presided over innumerable meetings and made innumerable speeches. What would women do without her? Many had misjudged her at times, but now, said the *Tasmanian Mail* , they acknowledged their error and joined other women in high regard and admiration for her, 'as the governor's wife and as a woman'.[2]

More popular, as active, but less outspoken, was Lady Strickland, who arrived in Tasmania in 1904. People were dubious at first: she was a Catholic, 'said to be very clever', and was 'not unknown as an author', all undesirable attributes in a governor's wife.[3] Soon, however, she was highly praised; maintaining the dignity of office, she was nevertheless 'pleasant and chatty', 'friendly and kindly'. She presided at many charitable meetings and spoke 'clearly and gracefully'; by 1905 she was described as presiding 'in her usual able manner'.[4] In a typical five-day period in 1906 she presided at two meetings and one lecture, opened a sale of work, gave tea to female university students, visited a school and attended the theatre and a ball.[5] At other times she visited boarded-out children in their homes, visited rescue homes, and was particularly active in pushing for the establishment of the Queen Alexandra hospital, organising Tasmania's entries in the Women's Work in Melbourne, and fighting baby farming, about which she felt strongly: it was owing to her and the governor that something was done, according to the *Mail.* [6] She was described as a 'tower of strength'

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[1] See relevant sections of this thesis; also *Tasmanian Mail* 22 November 1890, 19 December 1891, 12, 19, 26 November 1892; Agnes M. Morris *Lady Hamilton's Tasmania* the Author, Hobart, 1966

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 19 November 1892

[3] *Tasmanian Mail* 16 July, 17 September 1904

[4] *Tasmanian Mail* 5, 12, 26 November, 10 December 1904, 1, 3 July 1905, 29 September 1906

[5] *Tasmanian Mail* 18-22 August 1906

[6] *Tasmanian Mail* 15 February, 25 August 1906, 4 May, 14 September 1907

to many women's organisations.[1] She was extremely popular and was a model for Tasmanians of the 'new woman' of the period; active, charitable, not as autocratic as Lady Hamilton but willing to be forceful when necessary, and also embodying feminine virtues of kindness, grace and charm. Her less domineering personality and increased conventionality compared with Lady Hamilton was perhaps an indication that the enthusiasm of the 1890s had waned somewhat, leaving women consolidating gains rather than pushing for more.

This trait was also evident in Lady Barron, who arrived in 1909. It was a sign of women's increased importance that the *Tasmanian Mail* printed a long article about her,[2] previous governors' wives having been described in a paragraph at the end of articles about their husbands. She was vivacious, graceful and sympathetic, wrote the reporter, 'no careless woman of the world', untiring in her work for others, though she only helped deserving cases. She had visited all schools, hospitals and Homes in Tasmania. She rose early, superintended the household arrangements, and by nine was in her study, ready for work. Nor did she neglect her needle, giving 'piles of dainty garments' to fairs. No initiator, she nevertheless worked extremely hard while in Tasmania and on her departure was highly praised: she and the governor had not made one enemy and she had been 'not an ornament only but a real force', with unfailing sympathy and unsparing, practical help which had inspired and stimulated local women.[3] Such was a highly-praised woman of the period; a society butterfly would not have won such laurels.

Bishops' wives, too, brought new ideas to at least Anglican women. Maud Montgomery and Josephine Mercer were intelligent, active, idealistic women, who began new organisations in the Anglican church and urged local women to participate,[4] while Montgomery was also concerned with literary and sanitary matters, at the same time that Ladies Hamilton, Strickland and Barron were so active. These five women did a great deal to broaden the horizons of Tasmanian women, beginning new societies, and persuading and cajoling local women to participate. As well, from 1890 a succession of women came to Tasmania for the specific purpose of founding or encouraging organisations, particularly women connected with the WCTU and church organisations such as the Mothers' Union.[5] Visitors who stayed somewhat longer were Alicia Katz and Lilian Locke, both Labor organisers who worked to increase women's participation in the Labor movement and trade unions, with some success. Possibly because both believed strongly that women should not

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[1] *Tasmanian Mail* 3 April 1909

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 18 June 1910

[3] *Tasmanian Mail* 9 October 1909, 27 February, 13 March 1913

[4] See sections of this thesis entitled Voluntary Church Work and Prostitutes, also Social and Intellectual Interests and Sanitary and other Public Matters

[5] See sections of this thesis entitled Temperance Work and Voluntary Church Work

form a separate political group but should seek for improvement in their condition within the Labor movement, no successful separate women's political group developed in Tasmania.[1] Locke, Katz, Ackermann and other WCTU and church speakers all had a great deal of influence on Tasmanian women, successfully stirring them to activity, a task admitted as often difficult; possibly from the 1890s Tasmanian women reacted to women's new position by being more receptive to outside ideas. They also presented Tasmanian women with role models of active, articulate, self-confident women, models not plentiful among the Tasmanian population; however, despite the presence of these women only a few local women took up such a role. One visitor who was scheduled to come but did not arrive was Vida Goldstein; Tasmanians had looked forward to her 'attractive personality and great mental gifts', wrote the *Mail.* [2]

Three other women who came from the mainland were the effective local leaders of the WCTU, Grace Soltau, Annie Blair and Jessie Rooke. All had been in Tasmania only a few years before being elected; Soltau and Rooke had experience in such work before, but Blair apparently had none. All were good leaders, competent, hard-working, inspiring, and for the first time welded together scattered and inexperienced groups of Tasmanian women into a large organisation which, if not successful in its stated aims, at least showed that women could effectually organise, hold conferences, speak in public and achieve some small reforms.[3] Possibly one of the best role models was the second female doctor, Gertrude Halley (1907-1910), whose work in the School Medical Service was greatly admired and who was an example of an extremely successful professional woman in a hitherto male field.

Literature was one method of spreading ideas. Virtually all the colony's books came from Britain and British books were available in Tasmania within months of publication; in the 1850s Walch's bookshop, with stores in Hobart and Launceston, had a buyer in London ordering the latest books, which took three or four months to arrive in Hobart, and this situation continued throughout the period. The firm later published *Walch's Literary Intelligencer*, a literary journal which publicised and reviewed new books for over fifty years.[4] Women could therefore know of and buy the latest books from Britain. Newspapers were also influential. One woman editor, Sara Gill, ran the *Tasmanian News* from 1886-1896; she was more interested in championing the working class than women specifically, but she was in favour of women's suffrage and equal pay for women, and

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[1] See sections of this thesis entitled Trade Unions and Women's Political Activity

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 26 March 1904

[3] See section of this thesis entitled Temperance Work

[4] Charles Walch *The Story of the Life of Charles Edward Walch* the Author, Hobart, 1908, pp. xli-xlii, xlviii, lvii-lviii

frequently said so.[1] Until the 1880s newspapers had little specifically concerning women, though some overseas articles were printed,[2] but after this date newspapers began to run women's columns; the middle-class *Tasmanian Mail* is a good example. In the early 1880s it began a Women's Column which included nothing local, only overseas gossip, fashion notes and recipes. In 1889 'Alix' began to write a Hobart Ladies' Letter and continued until 'Aquila' took over in 1899; this year 'Russet' began a Launceston Ladies' Letter.[3] From 1900 Letters also appeared sporadically from the north-west and west coasts. All correspondents approved women's various activities, but Russet and the country correspondents merely reported social items and charitable endeavours, as did Aquila, who wrote in 1906 that to write of politics would be 'too much for the forbearance of the generality of pleasantly frivolous women'.[4] Alix injected a more intellectual note. An admirer of Lady Hamilton and Emily , she supported women's organisations in most activities and encouraged participation; she included herself among 'advocates of the cause of women'.[5] From 1893 she strongly supported women's suffrage. She was clearly active herself: she attended meetings, visited the Village Settlement and the Convalescent Home among other institutions, and read widely. She also commented on current affairs (for example, the Dreyfus case) and in 1899 praised Boer women for their patriotism in nursing and giving up their sons ('in their eyes they are in the right'), an unusually bi-partisan view for a Tasmanian woman.[6]

The left-wing newspapers ran a series of strangely different women's columns. From 1896 to 1899 the *Clipper* ran the 'Women's Scrap Book', which among other items offered to publish women's letters (though few were forthcoming), printed stories of women succeeding elsewhere, called for support for deserted wives and children, and criticised a clergymen for beginning a sermon 'My Dear Brothers' when 80% of his congregation were women.[7] There was also a good deal of information about fashion and household items. The author, Miss Nancy Hogan of Evandale, was a teacher in Hobart, and wrote under the

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[1] *Tasmanian News* 26 July 1886, 15 July 1896. Born in Tasmania in 1850, Gill married Henry Gill who began the *News* in Hobart in 1883; she became editor possibly after Henry was injured in an accident or possibly as he was more interested in entering parliament (*ADB* vol 4, pp. 247-248)

[2] In 1860, for example, the *Mercury* reprinted articles from various points of view on: women's duty to please men and stay at home (2 January), women's education (24 January), divorce (23 February, 20 April, 1 May), women's work (9 March)

[3] *Tasmanian Mail* 21 September 1889, 25 November, 9 December 1899

[4] *Tasmanian Mail* 22 September 1906

[5] *Tasmanian Mail* 20 May 1893

[6] *Tasmanian Mail* 23 September, 14 October 1899

[7] *Clipper* 21 November 1896, 6 March, 20 March, 17 July 1897

pseudonym 'Julia Demos'; she was interested in Socialism and had read Henry George and J.S. Mill at an early age.[1] Even she had difficulty filling the column and once bemoaned the fact that she could not depend on using only recipes any more, indicating that in the 1890s recipes were not considered enough to interest women.

From 1904-8 the *Clipper* ran a column entitled 'Womanities', with fashion, cookery and household hints; in 1905 the writer told women that success in life could come only through marriage.[2] Even less enlightened was a column in the *Clipper* 's successor, the *Daily Post*, from 1910 to 1911, entitled 'Eve's Diary', which gave long descriptions of balls, weddings and other middle-class social events, even while articles fervently denouncing the sweating of women workers were printed on other pages.[3] Similar was a short-lived 'Women's Gossip' column of 1912.[4] Overlapping these two columns was a page called 'Women and Home' by 'Hypatia', which began in 1911.[5] Although Hypatia too included recipes and household hints, and poems, she clearly wished to raise women's consciousness, writing articles on the Maternity Bonus, the Housewives' Union, hygiene in pregnancy, the necessity for sex education and other current social and political issues.[6] She wrote many articles on Labor politics, and urged women to think of the questions of the day, as it was their duty to take an interest in politics: 'all over the world women are waking up to their duties and responsibilities'.[7] In October 1912 she urged women to buy shares in the *Daily Post:* 'the Labor movement of Tasmania expects every woman to do her duty'.[8] Hypatia identified herself as having been a teacher and had children, and appeared a well-informed, well-educated Labor sympathiser. A letter described her as 'a leader of thought among the women readers'.[9] She was, in fact, Edith Waterworth, later active in politics,but in this period her only public activity was this column; though she was interested in women's rights she found little support for her ideas among women in general and was in any case preoccupied with her young children.[10] She did believe that women had a right to

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[1] *Clipper* 22 April 1905

[2] *Clipper* 12 August 1905

[3] For example, *Daily Post* 8 January 1910

[4] For example, *Daily Post* 9 January 1912

[5] *Daily Post* 27 June 1911

[6] For example, *Daily Post* 23 September 1911, 19 October, 14 December 1912, 6 December 1913, 7 March 1914

[7] *Daily Post* 11 July 1911, 11 April 1914

[8] *Daily Post* 26 October 1912

[9] *Daily Post* 19 October 1911

[10] Interview with Waterworth's son, Eric Waterworth, Margate, Tasmania, 3 October 1989; and see Heather Radi (ed) *200 Australian Women* Women's Redress Press, Broadway NSW, [1988], pp. 95-96

take part in public affairs and work with men; she printed many letters from women, often on political topics (many actually signed by Edith Waterworth) and, to a far greater degree than any other journalist, encouraged her readers to take an interest in political and current questions and to reflect on women's role. The increase in activity among Labor women after 1910 was probably largely due to her encouragement. These women writers had considerable influence, and in 1910 a woman praised the 'clever women writers in the local papers, whose work is looked forward to eagerly week by week'.[1]

As well as visitors and newspapers, a third influence on women was local leaders, the few women who started organisations and held positions which gave them prominence. Until the 1890s there were extremely few, if any, in this position, and even women who were, say, presidents of the Dorcas Society, gained little prominence and exerted little influence. Possibly the author of *One of Four: Words to Women, A Plea for Certain Sufferers*, published anonymously in 1858 and discussing prostitution with insight and sympathy,[2] had some influence, but the identity is unknown. From 1890 onwards some local women do stand out, with one woman towering over all others: Emily Dobson. She was born at Port Arthur in 1842 and was educated at home, largely by her father, a man of wide interests. At the age of twenty-five she married Henry Dobson, a lawyer and later politician, and bore him five children.[3] For the next twenty years nothing is heard of her and she apparently cared for her children and ran the house in the usual way; she was not a member of such women's organisations as existed. Exactly what made her enter public life suddenly in the early 1890s is unclear, though at this date her husband entered politics and became premier and her children were grown up and needed less attention. Other premiers' wives and mothers of adult children, however, did not branch into public life; but at this date women were entering public life in many western countries and possibly Dobson's activity was a response to the general atmosphere (certainly later she was considerably influenced by overseas activity). She was, however, influenced by the traditional version of women's role and in 1891 told members of the Women's Sanitary Association that 'women don't always like the descent to the rough and tumble of politics' and it was well for them to do their own work, in the domestic sphere, first, and other work after.[4] In fact she enjoyed the rough and tumble of politics, as she quickly showed.

Her first two enterprises were in widely differing spheres. In 1891, with Lady Hamilton, she founded the Women's Sanitary Association which fought enthusiastically for

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[1] *Tasmanian Mail* 6 October 1910

[2] *One of Four: Words to Women, A Plea for Certain Sufferers* Hobart Town, George Rolwegan, 1858 (Tasmaniana Library)

[3] *Mercury* 7 June 1934; *ADB* vol 8, pp. 310-311

[4] *Mercury* 21 November 1891

better sanitation, and in 1892 she founded the Ministering Children's League, on the model of the British organisation, which encouraged middle-class children to assist the poor and do good.[1] From this date she was extremely active in most women's organisations in Hobart, and founded many. She aimed to improve all sections of society: the poor were to be assisted when in difficulties (Soup Kitchen), found work (Village Settlement), have their living conditions improved (Women's Sanitary Association), be provided with nursing (Bush Nursing, District Nursing, Victoria Convalescent hospital), child care (Creche, Kindergartens) Christmas treats (Sunshine Society) and kept busy and active when old (Brabazon Society); the middle class were to have their interests broadened by foreign language associations (Alliance Française and Deutsche Verein), literary organisations (Prose and Cons Society, Shakespeare Society), art (the Art Society), nature (Tasmanian Natural Science Society), music (Hobart Ladies' Choir), cookery (Dobson gave a course of lessons) and a general clubs (the Social Science Circle and the Women's Club, which Dobson founded and lectured on her travels). She organised Tasmanian entries in several large exhibitions and worked to assist children (Society for the Protection of Children), the blind (the Blind Society), girls (Girl Guides) and to spread ideas of Empire (Victoria League). She was the mainstay of the National Council of Women and extremely active in right-wing women's political groups, especially the Liberal League, and canvassed enthusiastically for her husband.[2] In most of these groups she played a dominant role, either founding them or acting as president; she was competent, energetic, a good speaker and excellent at running meetings. She also joined existing charitable groups (Dorcas Society, Girls' Industrial School); in fact it is difficult to find woman's organisations with which she had nothing to do. The *Tasmanian Mail* praised her; she was the foundress of one society, 'as she is of so many other progressive things in Tasmania'; 'she is the head and front of nearly all philanthropic and educational movements in Tasmania, and has been for a number of years, and in this she has always had the active support of her husband'; she never spared herself, was always prominent, and was often the leader and pioneer.[3] Her 'unfailing courtesy and kindness' and 'unselfish devotion' were noted. Such a prominent factor in all social and philanthropic entertainments and movements was she that 'her absence always leaves a perceptible blank'; and her return 'gives an impetus to all the things with which she is associated'; 'it is very noticeable the life her presence infuses into the different societies to

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[1] *Church News* April 1892

[2] See sections of this thesis entitled Political Activity, Intellectual and Social Interests

[3] *Tasmanian Mail* 30 April 1910, 23, 30 March 1911

which she belongs'.[1] She even influenced people outside Tasmania: in 1902 she helped inaugurate the National Council of Women in Victoria.[2]

Emily Dobson, then, established and ran a large number of societies; indeed, the number of societies not begun by her, governors' or bishops' wives was small. In this Dobson, like the governors' and bishops' wives, had no radical aim and no desire to change society. She wished to improve people within the context of existing society, though softening its worst aspects; she was paternalistic and had no qualms about forcing her own views on others, aiming to make the poor thrifty and hardworking and the wealthier charitable with wide interests. She would have liked more laws enforcing her ideas; for example, in 1914 at the National Council of Women's annual congress she pressed for regulations to stop women wearing 'indecently tight dresses'.[3] She was much influenced by overseas developments and most, if not all, of her foundations were based on others or were branches of other societies;[4] she was not an original thinker or theoretician. She had little interest in women's rights per se (for example, she made no objection to the Contagious Diseases Act and played no part in the muted fight for the vote[5]) and did not lead Tasmanian women into a specific women's movement aiming to improve women's position. Rather she aimed to improve society generally and women's issues were never reported as one of her interests, nor did she feel that women specifically were unjustly treated. She was completely uninterested in some areas; she had no sympathy with trade unions or Labor politics or in united political action by women.[6] With such a leader it is not surprising that a women's movement like that in some mainland states, America and England, did not eventuate in Tasmania; with Emily Dobson there to organise everything, other women did not need to do anything except follow her and other possible leaders were overshadowed by her, so only her ideas tended to come to fruition. The *Clipper* criticised her as trying to loom large on other people's money and gain fame through the misery of the poor, and some NCW members called her autocratic,[7] but in general her dominance of the philanthropic and intellectual scene was accepted and her never-ending work admired.

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[1] *Tasmanian Mail* 26 April 1902, 23 September 1905, 15 February 1912, 1 December 1906

[2] Ada Norris *Champions of the Impossible* The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 8-9

[3] *Mercury* 14 January 1914

[4] For example, she stated that after seeing the Brabazon Society in action in England she intended to start a branch in Hobart (*Tasmanian Mail* 21 July 1900)

[5] She was, however, chosen by the Deakin government to represent Australia at an International Women's Suffrage Convention (*Mercury* 7 June 1934); one wonders what she said there

[6] *Tasmanian Mail* 26 August 1893

[7] *Clipper* 6 March 1909, 28 July 1894, and see section of this thesis entitled Intellectual and Social interests

It is probable that the domination of Emily Dobson inhibited the development of a radical women's movement in Tasmania. Although these is little evidence of the beginnings of such a movement, Dobson squashed such women as Ida McAulay (see the section on Politics) who might have started one, and her strong personality and conviction that her beliefs were right meant it was difficult for anyone else to establish any group of which she disapproved.[1]

Typical of the more prominent of Dobson's supporters were Caroline Morton and Amy Chapman, both praised as good public speakers.[2] Morton, wife of the curator of the Tasmanian museum, had several books published and received good reviews. From the 1880s to 1914 she was an important figure in Hobart, especially in literary activities; she was a stalwart of the NCW and of the Liberal League, chairing the large 1912 conference at which she was praised.[3] (She could well have been 'Alix' of the *Tasmanian Mail*.) Amy Chapman too was a member of literary societies, secretary of the Creche Association and was politically active, first in the National Association then in the Liberal League.[4] The narrow spheres of these two women compared with Dobson highlights Dobson's enormous range of interests.

Two woman are known to have had intellectual interests. Ida McAulay advocated women's suffrage and wrote intellectual papers for the Itinerants; her group of six women who discussed women's issues was probably the nearest thing Tasmania had to a women's movement, but it was small, did not attempt to spread its views and wished for no publicity. McAulay, with her non-party views, was easily vanquished by Dobson who took over the Women's Suffrage Association from her; clearly McAulay was no leader and gained no following for her mildly radical ideas. In any case her diary shows her as immersed in her children, and theories about women's position came second.[5] Another woman with theoretical interests was Frances Edwards, though her interests were less in women's position than in children's. She was an enthusiastic member of the Society for the Protection of Children and published a series of articles highlighting inadequacies in the situation of children, as well as the position of deserted wives, lenient sentences for assault and the need for district nursing; she also wrote an article about Catherine Helen Spence and spoke to

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[1] I am grateful to Mrs Barbara Valentine of the Tasmaniana Library for her insight into the possibilities of Emily Dobson's character

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 26 June 1913, 18 June 1914

[3] *Daily Post* 30 January 1912, and see section of this thesis entitled Arts

[4] *Mercury* 2 September 1907; *Tasmanian Mail* 4 April 1908, and see section of this thesis entitled Political Activity

[5] NS 1077; see sections of this thesis entitled Political Activity and Intellectual and Social Interests

several societies.[1] She, and the Society, had success in gaining the 1907 Infant Protection Act so she was influential in this limited area.

The only female parliamentary candidate, Alicia O'Shea Petersen, must be included as at least a potentially influential woman, though the smallness of her vote indicates a lack of actual influence. Nevertheless, several historians have taken her seriously. Lacking the ability and the interest in women's position of, say, Vida Goldstein, Petersen also lacked her stature, but she was active and vocal, running the Australasian Women's Association and trying through advertising to effect a cessation of class hatred. This was at least original, one of the few original activities by Tasmanian women.[2] Like Dobson, Petersen called for regulations to enforce good living: compulsory detention of syphilis cases, a curfew for children.[3]

From the above information it is clear that until the 1880s little influence was exerted on Tasmanian women, either from visitors, newspapers or prominent local women, though the general British background, a continuous flow of migrants from Britain and the fact that almost all books came from Britain must have had some effect. This, however, is impossible to estimate. From the 1880s, however, areas of potential influence multiplied, with visiting women of various beliefs and newspapers presenting contemporary thought. In this period Tasmanian women had the chance to keep abreast of world opinion and women's movements in other areas, and to emulate them. Outside influences came together particularly strongly in the early 1890s; this was the period when Lady Hamilton and Maud Montgomery, both strong-minded women deeply devoted to reform and not at all hesitant in pointing out its need, were present, when Sara Gill was editor of the *Tasmanian News* and Alix began writing in the *Tasmanian Mail.*, and when Grace Soltau was working in Launceston. Probably it is no coincidence that this was the era which saw feminism burgeon.

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[1] *Daily Post* 24 February, 7 March, 14, 22 April, 25 June, 11 July, 1 August, 21 October, 15 November 1910, 8 August, 12 December 1913

[2] Heather Radi (ed) *200 Australian Women* Women's Redress Press, Broadway NSW, [1988], pp. 79-80; *Daily Post* 24 May 1912

[3] *Daily Post* 3 February 1910

Conclusion

The position of women in Tasmania went through three phases. For the first twenty years the population was small, the settlement disorganised, there was virtually no middle class, and middle class traditions and values were largely ignored. Anyone, man or woman, could undertake work, while marriage was not socially necessary and women lived in de facto relationships or took lovers; women were virtually as free as men in this flexible society.[1] Such a situation may well have left a tradition of women's freedom and equality in the colony, though there is no evidence for this.

From the 1820s until the 1880s, however, women were pushed into a more domestic role, as respectable settlers and especially Governor and Mrs Arthur arrived, bringing the beginning of the Victorian ideal of the domesticated lady and encouraging its adoption.[2] Churches were established and the middle class grew, though slowly; men moved into all business areas and it became more difficult, though not impossible, for women to conduct business. According to Alford women became valued mainly as wives and mothers and as a civilising force,[3] and it is acknowledged that the colonial ideal of womanhood copied the British ideal, which saw woman as the clinging vine, dependent on the dominant male, refined, dainty and delicate, who never worked inside or outside the home but spent her days in genteel idleness, influencing all about her for good and immersed in home, family, church and a little charitable activity, 'completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others'.[4] British women were seen as modest, retiring, compassionate, self-sacrificing, kind and mild, virtues which fitted them for domestic life but not for the more competitive society outside the home, and British writers propounded the theory of men and women's separate spheres, with women providing sympathy and refinement and domestic happiness, complementing men's mission to create and rule.[5] Even in Britain, however, this ideal was not entirely dominant, and one historian writes that he was struck by how many women led independent lives; 'we are perhaps too prone to see limitations where the women of the past saw possibilities'.[6] A study shows that in fact many middle-class women had a good deal of

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[1] Alison Alexander *Governors' Ladies* THRA, Hobart, 1987, chapters 1 - 7; and see Miriam Dixson *The Real Matilda* Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1984, passim

[2] See Alexander chapter 8

[3] Katrina Alford *Production or Reproduction? An Economic History of Women in Australia, 1788-1850* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1984, p. 7

[4] Quoted in Martha Vicinus *Independent Women* Virago, London, 1985, p. 4

[5] F.K. Prochaska *Women and Philanthropy in 19th century England* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980, p. 3

[6] Prochaska p. 1

domestic work,[1] and Vicinus notes that the proclaimed roles for each sex 'were often at odds with the reality of daily life'.[2]

To what extent this British ideal influenced Tasmanian women is debatable. Alford concludes that the British attitude contrasted sharply with colonial reality for many, and the colonies produced a homespun version with 'slightly less emphasis on female frailty and daintiness, and rather more on the practical accomplishments required of colonial women'.[3] Tasmanian conditions bear this out, though I would contend that the Tasmanian version was even more homespun and less refined.

Women's work was little valued in Britain, where, indeed, a lady never worked for gain.[4] The colonial experience differed; this was a far more practical environment, where practical abilities were necessary. As already demonstrated, many Tasmanian women, probably a majority, worked outside the home; most were working class but there were also those of the highest social rank, though generally a lady could do only certain types of work: teaching, art and writing. Nevertheless, one 'gentleman' at least married a postmistress who continued to work, and another postmistress was described on her death certificate as 'gentlewoman',[5] so some ladies at least did other work without apparent loss of status.[6] The major employment for women was domestic service, and to some degree the authorities realised the importance of this;[7] the importance of the work women did assisting their husbands on farms particularly but also in businesses was acknowledged too.[8] There had long been a working-class tradition in Britain of the family as an economic unit, all of whose members contributed to the family income, and, with most colonists originating from the British working-class or lower middle class, this tradition continued in Tasmania. Women contributed significantly to the Tasmanian economy and the importance of their contribution was at least partly recognised. This gave women a higher status in the community than they would have received had they been expected to make a minimal economic contribution.

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[1] Patricia Branca *Silent Sisterhood: Middle-Class Women in the Virtocian Home* Croom Helm, London, 1975, part 1

[2] Vicinus p. 4

[3] Alford p. 243

[4] Prochaska p. 5

[5] NS 687: James Laffere, gentleman, married Susannah Hill, postmistress at Port Cygnet, in 1883, and Grace Wilson, New Norfolk postmistress and gentlewoman, died in 1855

[6] Catherine Helen Spence's work shows this was also the case in South Australia: see 'Clara Morison' in Helen Thomson (ed) *Catherine Helen Spence* University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1987, pp. 150-151

[7] This is shown in the *Report of the Committee of the Whole Council Upon Immigration* 1841; female servants were 'the great desideratum in the colony', pp. 12-13

[8] Women assisting husbands on farms and in some businesses were recognised as breadwinners in censuses

The ideal lady had someone else to do the housework, but this was more difficult in Tasmania than Britain. Servants were often in short supply and when available often needed training and certainly supervision; this kept the mistress busy, and when no servant was available she had to work herself.[1] Most households had only one servant and this left a considerable amount of work for the mistress, and it would also appear that Tasmanian women had more to do with their children than their British counterparts,[2] partly due to a lack of servants and partly, probably, to counteract the influence of convict servants. So Tasmanian women, even if not engaged in paid employment, had more domestic concerns that British and few could afford or manage to live in the genteel idleness the ideal demanded.

Other elements of the stereotype were in short supply. Tasmania was not a place humming with intellectual activity; it was 'Sleepy Hollow', conservative, quiet and peaceful, a self-conscious backwater from the time of the gold rushes, when Victoria left it so spectacularly far behind. There was little to encourage men's intellectual and cultural activity, let alone women's, while few emigrants had received a good education and local schools were generally of a low standard, so few women had the education to behave in the cultured manner of a real lady. Various forms of sport - walking, swimming, riding, tennis, quoits, croquet - were enjoyed by women and girls, who generally had more freedom and undertook more physical activity than women in Britain, and this made the myth of frailty difficult, and indeed undesirable, to establish. Charities were usually not successful and few women were involved with them. Indeed, middle class virtues as a whole were slow to be established. The elite in Tasmania, though growing in number and influence from the 1820s, remained small and insecure until the 1850s. At first government was by bureaucrats and the elite lacked political power; Tasmania was never rich and few, even of the elite, were really wealthy, so they lacked financial power as well. Few members came from the English elite so Tasmanians lacked the traditions and confidence of this class. Many members of the Tasmanian elite were only temporarily stationed there, so lacked a sense of commitment to the community. Thus until the 1850s there was no powerful group encouraging middle class values, though all who wished to be considered middle class had to display respectability, to

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[1] For example, Mrs Fenton found servants encroached on her time (*Mrs Fenton's Tasmanian Journal 1829-1830* Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide, 1986, pp. 32, 34-36); Jane Williams' mother had to iron clothes when the family had no servant (P. Brown [ed]*Clyde Company Papers* vol 3, Oxford University Press, London, 1958, p. 482); one woman wrote that 'the servants here render it so difficult for a mistress of a family to leave home [on a visit]' (N.Nixon *The Pioneer Bishop in V.D.L.* the Author, Hobart, 1953, p. 29)

[2] For example, Lady Denison felt 'unusually at leisure' when four of her children were absent from home, implying she was not at leisure when they were at home (Alexander pp. 138-139)

differentiate them from convicts.[1] This led to a considerable concern for propriety, but propriety was only one aspect of being a lady; and even so, Lady Denison found Tasmania a 'not very tightlaced community'.[2]

Once Tasmania gained self-government the influence of bureaucrats lessened and the elite gained more political power and confidence, and its influence grew in the 1860s and 1870s. Growth was slow, however, and middle class values were slower to be accepted in Tasmania than in England; a casualty of this was the ideal of the lady. There is little evidence that real ladies in the British sense existed except in the few very wealthy families,[3] and visitors saw Tasmanian society as second-rate.[4] Indeed, though Tasmanian society was more rigid than in its infancy, the upwardly socially mobile could still succeed; in 1814 a list (short) of ladies and gentlemen in the colony included convicts' children,[5] and the convict family who had done well in trade or on the land and by the 1850s was accepted as respectable with its womenfolk seen as ladies was no rarity.[6] As there were so few families which could be considered gentry, as in Britain - the British gentry, being usually prosperous, were unlikely to emigrate - virtually anyone with a reasonable income and genteel behaviour was accepted into the ranks of the elite. When the governor asked 400 colonists to a ball he had to include people of convict descent and merchants' families, or the rooms of Government House would have been sparsely populated.[7] The Hopkins, Pillingers, and Haddons were all examples of families connected with convicts or trade, unacceptable as elite in Britain but quite acceptable in Tasmania. Their womenfolk, coming from the British working or lower middle classes, had no traditions of ladylike behaviour and could not be expected to become perfect ladies on the British model; Sarah Hopkins, for example, from a London artisan background, lived in Hobart in 1822 in a two-roomed cottage but by the 1830s inhabited the largest house in town.[8] The only guide she would have had to living in such an environment was the behaviour of other Hobart women. The ideal of the lady, in transposition from Britain to Tasmania, was considerably adapted to suit

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[1] See Dixson pp. 179, 198, 202, 204

[2] Alexander p. 141

[3] Sarah Leake, for example, could write that she ordered the meals and spent the rest of the day reading, but she was a wealthy grazier's daughter (UTA L1/8/2(1) 17 May 1854)

[4] For example, Nixon p. 10

[5] Mary Nicholls (ed) *The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood 1803-1838* THRA, Hobart, 1977, p. 177

[6] The Hopkins, Pillinger and Hadden families are examples; see Alison Alexander 'Two Tasmanian Nonconformists', unpublished MA thesis, University of Tasmania 1984, and Herbert Cullis *No Tears for Jane* the Author, Ashburton Victoria, 1982

[7] Alexander p. 141

[8] Alexander 'Two Tasmanian Nonconformists' chapters 2, 3, and 5

colonial conditions, where women's work was more highly valued, women had more independence, and middle class women had less free time, less education, less confidence and knowledge of what was expected of a lady. As a result, outsiders found that colonial women demonstrated unladylike traits; they were independent, sharp-witted, and even bold.[1]

Contemporary diaries indicate that women led active, cheerful lives. Within the accepted confines for women they could take part in mildly intellectual (the Clarke family's Symposiums, table turning - all the rage in the 1840s[2]) and physical activity, and certainly did not write as if they thought themselves, or were treated, as inferior to men. Marriage appeared to be looked on as a partnership rather than a union of superior and dependant,[3] and this is borne out by the many women who assisted their husbands in their employment, from governors' and clergymen's wives down the social scale. Within the Clarke family, Martha Clarke, a competent woman, ran the finances and apropos of this wrote to her daughter Grace, 'I often wish I had someone to help me do things'. Clearly her husband did little. On a visit to New Zealand Grace wrote to her father to 'ask mamma' about financial matters - 'if you find it too deep for you, you can miss it out' - and, encouraging him to write to her, 'perhaps in spite of your age you have turned over a new leaf'.[4] George Clarke was an esteemed minister, a pillar of the community, but he did not play a domestic patriarchal role; his women folk did not outwardly rebel, however, and the Clarkes appeared a conventional family headed by the husband and father. Other women who wrote diaries (Jessie Meredith, Beatrice Travers, Catherine Walch[5]) showed the same spirit and it is echoed in various incidents: James Backhouse's and Caroline Denison's independent washerwomen, the girls of 1857 who refused to allow a visiting clergyman to dictate to them, a woman in 1860 who wrote a defence of spinsters.[6]

While the delicacy and dependence of the lady, and her cultural activity, was less important than in Britain, women's domestic role was highly valued and women's primary role seen as that of a wife and mother, creating a comfortable home and rearing children. This view of women is evident on the rare occasions when women's role was discussed; woman's place was in the family, said a writer in 1857; if she were transferred to public life (by speaking in public) the peace and comfort of the family circle would be marred and the

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[1] Ruth Teale *Colonial Eve* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1978, p. 72

[2] Alexander *Governors' Ladies* p. 143. Table turning was similar to a ouija board

[3] See Patricia Grimshaw 'Women and the Family in Australian History' in Elizabeth Windshuttle *Women, Class and History* Fontana Books, Melbourne, 1980, p. 42

[4] Undated letters by Martha and Grace Clarke, Summerhome, Moonah, Tasmania

[5] NS 615/1-15; UTA K 9/6.2; diaries of Catherine Walch in the possession of J. Atkinson, Sandy Bay, Tasmania

[6] *Mercury* 27 February 1860

whole fabric of social life destroyed.[1] That such an all-encompassing fear could come from the presence of one female speaker indicates the strength of masculine opinion about woman's place. Women themselves echoed this; in the same year a group of women running a bazaar said the real business of women's life was housekeeping, family training, personal piety and good works.[2] A man writing to his sister about her possible marriage was presumably reflecting reality when he advised her that 'on the choice of a suitable partner all your future happiness depends'.[3] The domestic role was combined, rarely, with woman's civilising mission when Elliston remarked in 1837 that when women began to arrive in the colony 'that improved tone was given to the community at large which the influence of the softer sex and well regulated domestic circles are sure to confer'.[4] In nineteenth century Tasmania the primacy of women's domestic role was unquestioned.

Neither did women play any public role; Lady Franklin became unpopular from her activities in politics,[5] there were few female speakers, women's societies were few and unobtrusive, women rarely appeared in newspapers and in fact it is difficult to name any prominent Tasmanian woman from the 1820s to the 1880s (except Louisa Ann Meredith, writer and artist). Those women with superior employment (matrons of institutions, headmistresses of larger schools) did their work unostentatiously and did not attempt to have any wider influence.

Some influences encouraged colonial women to act as ladies; books, dignitaries such as governors' wives, and an attempt to live up to British ideals, always present in a British colony at this time. The main message of these influences was perceived as being that women's main activity was domestic; governors' wives for example, the most authentic examples of real ladies, were praised primarily for their domestic virtues.[6] It was the aspects of refinement, inactivity, cultural activity, meekness and subservience which tended to fall on less fertile ground; outside influences were not as strong as the realities of the colonial situation, and Tasmanian women, interested in practicalities rather than theories, comfortably adapted British ideas to conform with that reality. Certainly middle-class women aimed to be seen as 'ladies', - the multitude of seminaries, trying to turn colonial girls into young ladies,

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[1] *Tasmanian Daily News* 11 November 1857

[2] *Ladies' Bazaar* no 1, vol 1 (Tasmaniana Library)

[3] JR Skemp *Letters to Anne* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1956, p. 19

[4] Elliston 1837 p. 64

[5] Alexander *Governors' Ladies* chapter 9

[6] Beverley Kingston 'The Lady and the Australian Girl' in Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns (eds) *New Feminist Perceptives* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 32; Alexander *Governors' Ladies* chapter 11; an example of public activity by a governor's wife prior to 1890 occurred in 1861 when Lady Young was praised condescendingly by the *Mercury* for a 'very nice little speech' (22 August 1861)

illustrates this - but the 'lady' in Tasmania was a distant cousin only of the 'lady' in Britain; more practical, more robust, less cultured, dainty and refined. The wider application of the term 'lady' is seen when a 1873 petition from 285 women[1] was described (admittedly by the Opposition) as being from 'a few ladies...moving in that sphere of life which did not give their protest much importance'.[2] Presumably such women were of humbler background and/or poor, women unlikely to have been perceived as 'ladies' in Britain.

Women seemed content with their position. With their work both inside and outside the home valued, treated more equally in practice with men than in Britain, with considerable autonomy and freedom within the domestic sphere, there was no agitation by women to modify the situation in which, by law and custom, they were under men's jurisdiction. The only agitation for legal change, the petition mentioned above, was *against* a law giving women slightly more freedom (to marry a deceased sister's husband). When training for employment was available women took it up, but there was no association of women for a feminist purpose: no demand for training, better employment or better conditions, or for the vote, legal equality, or repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, no movement for social purity, all of which appeared in Britain and America and some on the mainland.[3] An extremely intelligent woman like Minnie Clarke, who wrote in 1881 that 'It was a mistake I was a woman. Nature intended me to wag my head in a pulpit', added, 'To be sure there is such a thing as a preaching woman...but then on the other hand there's the old gentleman [her father] with his horror of monstrosities'[4] in which category women preachers were presumably included. Minnie Clarke accepted the limitations placed on her by her family and society, in no way attempting to rebel. Some legal rights were gained for women, but women did not request them; they came more as a result of overseas change and were accepted easily by parliament and the community generally, probably because society had internalised views of women's higher status.[5] In Britain and America there was considerable debate about women's position,[6] but this did not apparently occur in Tasmania, possibly

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[1] *Journals of the Legislative Council* 1873 paper 39

[2] *Mercury* 4 July 1873

[3] See Olive Banks *Faces of Feminism* Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1981, pp. 35-36, 110, and passim; Martha Vicinus *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973, passim; Martha Vicinus *A Widening Sphere* Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1980, pp. ix, x; Helen Jones *In Her Own Name: Women in South Australian History* Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, chapter 1; Jane Rendall *The Origins of Modern Feminism* Macmillan, London, 1985, pp. 1-2 and passim

[4] Minnie Clarke to Sarah Clarke, letter dated 'Thursday June 2nd, Grove Cottage', Summerhome, Moonah, Tasmania

[5] Grimshaw p. 45

[6] Vicinus p. 121

because Tasmania was a society not prone to theoretical debate, possibly because women themselves were reasonably contented with their position and did not raise the question. Their high status within the domestic arena was enough, and they did nothing to counteract their perceived inferiority to men in the public sphere; there were few influences to raise their consciousness, with books such as Mill's *The Subjection of Women* being apparently unnoticed.[1] In Britain and America at this time modern feminism was beginning, as women came together to recognise and assert their common interests for a feminist purpose;[2] it is very difficult to see even stirrings of this in Tasmanian women's activity.

Most of the above applies to middle class women; there is little material about working class women. Most were extremely busy; the majority worked outside the home at some stage at least and many had to combine employment and caring for a family. Even less than middle class women, they took no part in public life, and did not join trade unions. Their reaction to the feminine ideal is unknown. They often worked as servants, but otherwise interaction with the middle class was limited; the few charitable societies offered help to distressed women but this affected only a tiny percentage of working-class women. Some resisted middle class attempts to influence them; some were rude to Dorcas ladies, most prostitutes resisted efforts to reclaim them.[3] Middle class values appeared to have little effect on working class women, though some working class movements, such as temperance societies and benefit societies, encouraged respectable virtues such as thrift and sobriety; in this period, however, women had little connection with these movements. When working class families made money and joined the middle class, it would appear that women adopted the Tasmanian middle class way of life, though this was not invariable (note the woman who ran a young ladies' seminary next to her husband's hotel and who became drunk and used vulgar language[4]). Kingston and Alford point out that the ideals of femininity and the lady were class-based, depending for their fulfilment on the attainment of a certain socio-economic status and income.[5]

The *Tasmanian Punch*, published in 1866-1868 and 1877-1878, does indicate that women's position changed slightly. In the earlier period 21 cartoons concerned women; eleven dealt with aspects of courting and women's attractiveness, four with marriage, three

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[1] The only known connection between Tasmanian women and Mill occurred when the obituary of Nancy Hogan, who wrote for the *Clipper* from 1896 to 1899, related that she read Mill as a girl, though which of his books was not related (*Clipper* 22 April 1905)

[2] Jane Rendall *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860* Macmillan, London, 1985, p. 1 and passim; Vicinus *A Widening Sphere* pp. ix, x

[3] See sections of this thesis entitled 'Assistance to Women' and 'Prostitution'

[4] *Colonial Times* 21 November 1837

[5] Kingston in Grieve and Burns p. 27; Alford p. 242

with clothes, two with working women (one showing a servant acting independently) and one showed a girl roller-skating.[1] In the latter period 18 cartoons concerned women: six dealt with courting, two with marriage, four with clothes, one with working women, one with physical exercise, but as well one showed women smoking and drinking (as an appalling vision of the future), one depicted 'larrikinesses', one referred to a servant being found attractive by a master, and one showed the father looking after a large family of children while mother wrote an essay on Women's Rights,[2] the only mention of any interest by women in this issue in the 1870s and another futuristic vision, as no known Tasmanian woman did such a thing. The difference in the two periods indicates that male cartoonists perceived women's position as changing, slowly; in the 1860s women were shown as almost entirely confined to a domestic role, but by the 1870s varied independent activities were noted and obviously the idea of women's rights was familiar to Tasmanians (probably through local reprints of British newspaper articles) though not taken particularly seriously.

One reason women's position was slowly changing was a drop in the birthrate. This dropped in Australia generally in the second half of the nineteenth century and there was a sharp decline in family size. Women born in 1836-1841 had an average family of seven children; those born in 1866-1871, approximately 4.5; those born in 1886-1891, 3.5.[3] Australia-wide the birth rate fell considerably from 1886 to 1901, though Tasmania had among the highest Australian birth rates (260 per thousand in 1901, when the national average was 239).[4] Nevertheless, these figures meant that from approximately the 1880s women had fewer children and smaller families, so had to spend considerable less time in childbearing and child care and had more time and energy for outside activities. This was, however, a gradual trend and was not enough to explain the sudden burst of activity by women from the mid-1880s.[5] The main reason was an increase in the number of women

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[1] *Tasmanian Punch* 4, 18 August, 15 September, 13, 26 October 1866, 11, 23 February, 20 April, 1, 14, 29 June, 13, 27 July, 24 August, 19 October 14 December 1867

[2] *Tasmanian Punch* 11 August, 1, 8, 22 September, 20 October, 3, 17 November 1877, 5 January, 2, 16 February, 27 July, 24 August, 7, 21 September 1878

[3] Lado T. Ruzicka and John C. Caldwell *The End of Demographic Transition in Australia* ANU, Canberra, 1977, p. 151. I am indebted to Dr Peter Gunn of the Sociology Department, University of Tasmania, for information concerning demographic changes

[4] Gigi Santow, W.D.Borrie, Lado T. Ruzicka 'Landmarks in Australian Population History' in *Journal of the Australian Population Association* Supplement to vol 5, 1988, p. 138, 139, 140, 151; and see Colin Forster 'Aspects of Australian Fertility, 1861-1901' in *Australian Economic History Review* XIV (2, Sept) 1974, pp. 105-122

[5] See Pat Quiggin *No rising generation* Australian Family Formation Project, Canberra, 1988, pp. 39, 55

and agencies (Lady Hamilton, Maud Montgomery and the WCTU, plus local newspapers[1]) bringing to Tasmanian women new ideas of women's position and rights, which were being developed and accepted overseas, and encouraging women to act. Developments in women's education and legal position had already accustomed women to the possibility of change and had broadened their horizons somewhat.

From the 1880s first-wave feminism gathered strength in many western societies, including Britain, America and Australia, and was at its peak in the early twentieth century.[2] It is widely seen as a movement of rebellion by women whose position and work were undervalued and who had been forced into a domestic role. The characteristics of first-wave feminism are variously described as domestic feminism, aiming to enhance the status of women within the family; the demand for the vote; the demand for autonomy; and a feminist working-class challenge to middle-class leaders.[3] Though Tasmania followed this world-wide trend and made few original additions, Tasmanian women reproduced only certain aspects of international first-wave feminism.

There was certainly considerable change in Tasmania, beginning slowly in the 1870s and 1880s and exploding in the 1890s, and affecting many aspects of women's lives. Several changes reflected overseas changes. The first came in girls' education: from the 1870s, inspired by British developments, this had broadened to include more academic subjects and intellectual stimulation with girls receiving much the same education as boys and able to gain academic qualifications. Change accelerated from 1887-1892, with the establishment of five new schools providing a full academic education and the opening of the University, which accepted female students. The community accepted this considerable and rapid change remarkably easily, though old-style schools continued to exist until 1914. Girls' academic attainments were now appreciated, and this was a new area in which girls could achieve. Nevertheless, as in other countries, educated women had a low profile in the women's movement;[4] possibly with their studies and later careers they were too busy and felt too divorced from the general run of women to do so, while in Tasmania there was no tradition of the intelligentsia leading any movement, and, except among themselves, they did not have a particularly high status.

As remarkable as the acceptance of educational change was the rapid emergence of women's societies. These had existed before, but they had been few, often unsuccessful,

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[1] See sections entitled Intellectual and Social Activity, Charity, Prostitution, Church Work, Efforts to change society, and Influences and potential influences on Tasmanian women

[2] Vicinus p. 122

[3] Betty Searle *Silk & Calico : Class, Gender and the Vote* Hale & Ironmonger, Sydney, 1988, p. 19; Banks p. 36, 116, 119, 122-123; Jones p. 121

[4] Dixson in Grieve and Burns, p. 20

and unobtrusive, working quietly mainly to assist needy women and girls. They did increase in the 1870s and 1880s but the 1890s saw a huge rise in their number. Women had been active in some areas, for example charity, sport and intellectual pursuits such as reading, but usually on an individual basis. From 1890 these activities became organised and women formed and joined societies in these areas, as well as in nursing, unemployment assistance, temperance and sanitation. The number of women's societies continued to grow in the 1900s, in the fields of art, music, horticulture and all manner of intellectual subjects, social clubs, political groups, women's church associations and friendly societies, as well as a variety of sport and charities in many areas. Women also joined groups with men. By 1914 a large number of women's societies existed, catering for all classes and situated in all areas of the state, so virtually all Tasmanian women could join a society. As in New South Wales little of this activity was original,[1] and much was begun by outsiders or Emily Dobson, but women did take part in what was offered. Some organisations were more successful than others and in 1899 the difficulty of getting Tasmanians to act was noted,[2] but generally the picture emerges of a considerable increase in women's extra-domestic activity. Women gained considerable self-confidence thereby. Banks points out that the great growth in the number of women's clubs occurred generally in western societies, but the settlement movement, which she sees as even more important, was of negligible influence in Tasmania.[3]

The greatest change occurred in the early 1890s when women attempted to influence the wider community and acted with great determination to gain attention for their ideas. In trying to improve sanitation and encourage temperance, and to a lesser extent in claiming the vote, women, independently of men, challenged the (masculine) authorities and claimed the right to have their views heard. This created great interest and some criticism for unwomanly behaviour, and though in the 1890s women had little success in gaining their stated objects, they had much success in bringing them before the public and in demonstrating women's ability to act independently ('such meetings make us see how capable women are of doing important work, and speaking concisely and clearly'[4]). Possibly this well-publicised activity in the 1890s inspired extra-domestic activity over the next twenty years, for if women were sending deputations to the City Council demanding sanitary reform, joining the local church group or cricket team was a mere nothing. Once again, this sudden emergence of such determined behaviour was largely due to outsiders: the WCTU, which pressed for temperance and women's suffrage, was formed and led by

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[1] See Miriam Dixson *The Real Matilda* p. 203

[2] NS 337/8

[3] Banks pp. 91-93

[4] *Tasmanian Mail* 3 September 1892

outsiders, and Lady Hamilton, with Emily Dobson, was largely responsible for establishing the Women's Sanitary Association. Nevertheless, Tasmanian women supported these groups with considerable enthusiasm.

Change also occurred in women's employment. Until the 1880s this was limited and was usually, though by no means always, in the domestic area. From the 1880s new fields opened to women and by 1914 the idea of a woman having a career was accepted, with professional work open to middle class and some working class girls, and sales and office work and industrial employment as alternatives to domestic service, though this was still the largest employer of women and other traditional avenues of work remained, particularly that of the married woman assisting her husband. A large number, possibly the majority, of girls now worked after leaving school. Most expected to resign on marriage, but some remained single and working, and by 1914 there was a number of satisfying and well-paid careers for such women.[1]

An area of change little sought by Tasmanian women was legal rights; women were enabled to vote, the age of consent was raised, law was opened to women, working conditions were improved. Such changes came about largely because of the example of Britain and the mainland states, so Tasmanian women benefited from agitation by overseas women while local society was not embittered by any 'unwomanly' behaviour by female agitators.

One result of these changes was an alteration in the meaning of the term 'lady', as it appeared to broaden to include more women and more activity outside the home by women. There is some evidence that its use widened to include most respectable women; from the 1890s newspapers regularly referred to many women, for example female members of trade unions,[2] as ladies, and these women would not have been included as ladies before the 1880s. Ladies still had to behave respectably, but they could engage in activity outside the home and the term 'ladylike' referred more to proper behaviour that to the general activity of middle-class women, an understandable result considering the attributes of Tasmanian 'ladies' before the 1880s. 'Womanly' was now the most laudable adjective for women, indicating that the confining and restraining implications of the term 'lady' were no longer seen as essential for the ideal woman.

Another result was a change in the attitude to marriage by at least some Tasmanian women. As in the rest of Australia, the percentage of women aged 15-44 married fell, from

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[1] This development is noticeable in England: see Vicinus pp. 1-2, 5-7, and passim

[2] For example, *Clipper* 23 November 1895

53% in 1881(when figures are first available) to 48% in 1901.[1] While it was becoming generally accepted that women could take up a career, this was often seen as only a preliminary to marriage, the real aim of women. From the 1880s, however, an increasing number of women did not feel the need to marry; if they had or could earn sufficient income they stayed single, apparently without regrets, and often enjoyed lengthy and successful careers. Two prominent Hobart families in this period, for example, the Clarkes and the Walkers, contained a number of daughters, well-educated, well-connected, reasonably well-to-do women, who declined chances to marry. Mary Walker studied art in Europe and was later an artist in Tasmania, Sarah Walker founded a successful girls' school and Elizabeth remained at home housekeeping, caring for her mother, and assisting Sarah with boarders. One sister married.[2] In the Clarke family, Alice did the housekeeping, Sarah founded the school with Sarah Walker, and Minnie taught there. Two sisters did marry, one unsuccessfully.[3] Sarah and Minnie Clarke showed no regrets at all at remaining single. They were entirely involved in their academic and other (for example, extensive charitable) interests, had many friends, and enough income to enjoy a comfortable if consciously frugal life; enterprising and independent women, they were not going to marry merely for its own sake to conform with custom and had no family pressure to do so[4] ('I am no matrimonialist' wrote their mother[5]). So marriage was not seen as an inevitable goal, and single women were not necessarily seen, or saw themselves, as failures. A source of income was necessary for the single woman; by the 1880s and 1890s professional training was available to a fair range of girls and some from less wealthy families used this path to establish themselves in a career. Other occupations, less well paid, less rewarding and of lower status, did not offer such an attractive alternative to marriage, but there is no evidence that single women who ran a post office or shop, for example, were seen as inferior to married women. For many women marriage remained the ultimate goal, but by 1914 single women in Tasmania could lead successful lives in a variety of occupations without necessarily regretting their single status.

One document shows the influence new ideas about women's role had on one girl. Mildred Hood, aged seventeen in 1908, lived on a small farm near Hobart with her family. She worked in the house and on the farm, and tried various money-making ventures,

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[1] Colin Forster 'Aspects of Australian Fertility, 1861-1901' in *Australian Economic History Review* XIV (2, Sept) 1974, p. 118. In Victoria, where earlier figures are available, the percentage fell from 64% in 1861 to 42% in 1901

[2] Peter Benson Walker (ed) *All That We Inherit* J. Walch and Sons, Hobart, 1968, pp. 81-84

[3] Alison Alexander 'Two Tasmanian Nonconformists', chapter 15

[4] Interview with their great-niece, Cynthia Alexander, Moonah, Tasmania, 27 July 1989

[5] Martha Clarke to Grace Clarke, undated letter, Summerhome, Moonah, Tasmania

planting strawberries and vegetables, selling eggs, catching and selling birds and trapping rabbits and possums and selling the skins.[1] She had received little education but her ambition was to be a doctor, though 'I am afraid [that] is beyond my reach, but I often think there may be hope... Lady doctors are becoming more common'.[2] Her parents disliked the idea. Mildred did not have the money to go to college, so studied at home, teaching herself Arithmetic, Geography, Grammar, Writing and Shorthand, and later Latin, Greek and Medicine, though 'I find it very hard being my own TUTOR'.[3] She had considerable difficulties; it was hard to obtain books and find time to study, and her mother was unsympathetic; 'she thinks I ought to be satisfied to live on the farm'.[4] Mildred did not want pleasure, fine clothes, a happy home or 'husband and children to be bothered with'; she wanted to 'rescue the perishing and care for the dying'. She felt unassisted, by her parents and God (who could make her a doctor if He tried), and disadvantaged in being a girl (she wished her mother had the same interest in her daughters as her sons).[5] Her diary ended in 1911, but a note adds that she never achieved her ambition and 'never escaped until the day of her death from the thraldom of her family'.[6] Though some girls, usually from wealthy families, could break away into new careers, many like Mildred were imprisoned within the traditional feminine role and were unable to take up a more ambitious career through lack of education and money; this diary shows the frustration a girl could feel with the limitations placed upon her by her family. The fact that a girl in Mildred's position was aware of the possibilities for women and had such an ambition, however, does indicate the strength of the women's movement, which had permeated through various levels of society; the desire to achieve more than the traditional feminine role was not confined to those middle and upper class women with the necessary education to do so. Mildred's description of the 'bother' of marriage also illustrates that this was not the ultimate ambition for all girls.

Changes in women's education, work, extra-domestic activity, and attitude to marriage meant the attitude of women themselves and the community generally altered; there appeared a realisation of a new movement among women. WCTU members were called 'Women's Righters' in the press and the *Tasmanian Mail* called the era one of transition for women, in which they must be prepared to do anything;[7] this was in 1892, when change had only just begun. In 1893 the *Clipper* commented that women were 'more inclined to speak

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[1] NS 568/3 22 May 1908, 20 May, 21 September 1909, 21 March 1910, 15 August 1911

[2] NS 568/3 31 December 1908

[3] NS 568/3 22 January, 6, 28 June, 8 August 1909

[4] NS 568/3 15 January, 29 July, 3 December 1909

[5] NS 568/3 11, 22, 27 September 1909

[6] NS 568/3, last page

[7] *Mercury* 1 December 1892; *Tasmanian Mail* 13 August 1892

and think of themselves as women, the half of mankind - human beings.' Necessary to women were 'freedom of thought and speech and action, some intellectual sympathy', now they were 'a recognized division of the race, that they read and write, think and speak, and cultivate original opinions'. The following year the *Clipper* pointed out that 'ladies' were not to be immune from criticism, but must be measured by the same standard as men.[1] Both the *Clipper* and the *Mail* wrote about the New Woman, apparently meaning women who acted independently. For example, in 1895 the *Clipper* announced that the new woman and the new man movement had reached Zeehan, where a woman gave riding lessons, and in 1896 New Women at Mathinna gave a leap year ball (but the supper was poor and the *Clipper* thought the marriage statistics would remain unaltered, a facetious remark typical of some reaction to the New Woman).[2] The quest for work outside the domestic arena is also seen in private papers, for example 'sitting at home & doing needlework' was not enough for Sarah Clarke in 1892.[3] Sporadic comments on women's new position continued to be made. Why were women not allowed to enter for Rhodes Scholarships? asked the *Clipper* in 1904.[4] 'The advancement of women seems to be a very live subject at the capital!' wrote Russet of Launceston, though she herself thought women had 'too much enfranchisement' and their 'placid contentment' was in danger.[5] Aquila in Hobart described an indignation meeting about smallpox, and said women had always been interested in 'big things' but had been chary of showing their interest; now they must have the courage of their convictions.[6]

A more positive tone is discernable from 1910: 'these advanced days, when women are absolutely refusing to be dictated to by "mere man"'; when 'the extension and increasing importance of women's sphere in the affairs of the community' was recognised;[7] 'this is the day of women', 'the peculiar age of woman, who was now coming into her own'.[8] Even Russet acknowledged that 'it is recognised that the majority of women will do better work than the majority of men', and, in 1913, that the subject of women's rights was constantly before the public, and even those not really interested could not help discussing it. She told her readers they were lucky, living in 'free and happy conditions', without the social problems of England; dreadful conditions elsewhere horrified thinking women and their

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[1] *Clipper* 8 April 1893, 24 February 1894

[2] *Clipper* 7 September 1895, 7 March 1896, and see 29 June 1895, and *Tasmanian Mail* 17 August 1895

[3] W(/11/4(1) 24 January 1892

[4] *Clipper* 10 September 1904

[5] *Tasmanian Mail* 23 January 1904

[6] *Tasmanian Mail* 1 August 1903

[7] *Tasmanian Mail* 28 July 1910, 16 January 1913

[8] *Daily Post* 1 November 1912

behaviour was understandable (presumably referring to suffragettes).[1] It appears, therefore, that it took approximately twenty years before women's new position was generally accepted, and the 'age of transition' of 1892 became the 'age of woman' of 1912. Women's self-confidence is evident in a 1911 article by an anonymous woman on Parattah, a town established in the 1870s. She makes it clear that women were responsible for most community activity; the day school, Sunday School, building the church and hall, establishing a croquet lawn and the Annual Show. One man helped run the shop.[2] Such an article, not even giving lip-service to the importance of men's activities, was not seen before this date. The change in attitude is apparent in a letter a woman wrote to the *Mercury* in 1907:

> Time has changed wonderfully from when our dear old grandmothers were wont to do nothing but superintend the household arrangements...there is our share of work awaiting us...I want women to realise what it is to be really independent in thought and action. What a great thing it is to feel "true to one's self". To have the right to act up to our best instincts, and not feel we are likely to be snubbed by that superior creature man.[3]

Accepted behaviour for women is shown in literature: the heroine of a Tasmanian book published before 1912 (when it was a Sunday School prize) was independent, quick-tempered and active; she cooked, washed up and made beds, defeated men at ping-pong, and 'had a fixed idea of the inherent depravity of men'. She also led the church choir and supported foreign missions. Finally she married, but a female cousin, sweet and good, became a missionary in China. Less active English cousins did no housework; Tasmanian life was 'much healthier and happier'.[4]

In 1912 liberated behaviour by 'dandy' women was criticised in a letter. The dandy woman wore skin-tight clothes, low necklines, high heeled shoes, huge hats with 'hatpins like deadly swords pointing in all directions', powder and paint, and 'struts abroad with an air of the greatest importance', unlike 'the genuine woman' with 'true womanly character, dress and virtuous demeanour'.[5] On the whole, however, there was remarkably little criticism of women, and there was little apparent anti-male feeling among women themselves. A report of a Women's Sanitary Association meeting commented that it was sad

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[1] *Tasmanian Mail* 6 April 1911, 20 November 1913

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 7 December 1911

[3] *Mercury* 7 February 1907

[4] 'Tasman' *A Little Aversion* The Religious Tract Society, London, no date, pp. 13, 39, 47, 67, 89, 91; a note on the fly-leaf indicates that it was presented as a prize at the Methodist Sunday School, Exton, in 1912

[5] *Mercury* 24 February 1912

to assume men could not manage[1] and Edith Waterworth for one believed women should take part in public affairs with men without attempting to compete with, denigrate or challenge them.[2] Such sentiment seems typical, as it was in South Australia, for example.[3] At the same time men were frequently sympathetic to women's activity; this was seen when legal changes were suggested and generally there was a lack of opposition by men to women's activities with most men apparently seeing women's requests as fair and reasonable. Opposition usually came from other causes (for example, opposition to temperance) rather than opposition to women's rights per se. The result was a lack of antagonism and bitterness despite the considerable changes, which reinforces the conclusion that women had high value and status and a high degree of autonomy within the domestic sphere before 1890; extending this independence into public life did not create the tension inevitable if women had suddenly altered from more complete submission and a less valued position to independence.

Change was not total, however, and the ideal of women as domestic sunbeams was unchallenged. The WCTU justified its actions by stressing the womanliness of its members, the sanctity of their aims, and telling members their first duty was to their homes.[4] Even Ida McAulay and Edith Waterworth, two women most likely to participate in any women's movement, put domestic concerns before activism.[5] The WSA commented that many women were afraid of joining for fear of being connected with a movement called unfeminine, though they hastened to claim it was not.[6] In some areas, particularly trade unions and politics, women were content to remain men's assistants and did not assert their independence. Obituaries of women, published from approximately 1905 (another aspect of the increasing visibility of women) stressed those characteristics of the deceased most likely to win community praise. Of a sample of nine obituaries from 1906-1913, only one praised the deceased's 'keenest interest in public matters', adding quickly 'where women's influence was called for'.[7] Otherwise women were praised for their domestic virtues and their charity. Mrs E.L. Crowther was described as one of the kindest and sweetest of women. From her lips never fell unsympathetic or slighting references to anyone and she was a most devoted wife and mother. She helped philanthropic institutions and did many unostentatious good

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[1] *Mercury* 21 November 1891

[2] Interview with Eric Waterworth, Margate, 2 October 1989

[3] Jones p. xv

[4] For example, *People's Friend* July 1892, NS 337/9, 337/8

[5] This is clear from McAulay's diaries (NS 1077) and from an interview with Waterworth's son (Eric Waterworth, Margate, 2 October 1989)

[6] *Tasmanian Mail* 22 September 1900

[7] *Tasmanian Mail* 9 April 1910

deeds.[1] Mrs George Clarke was 'one of the womanly women'. Gentle and retiring, 'her kingdom was her home, and the love of husband and children sufficed, that seeming to her more desirable than any outside ambition'. Mrs C. Russen was invaluable as a committee member and as a wife 'a true helper'.[2] Mrs Adams received high praise: 'irreproachable as a wife, she was equally so as a mother, bringing up a large family of boys and girls to be an honour to their parents and their country. It is such women that are the salt of the earth'. Mrs H. Nicholls did no public work; she preferred to discharge her duty to the state in bringing up her family and 'making her husband's home a happy one'.[3] Mrs Baker of Devonport, president of the Mothers' Union, Girls' Friendly Society, Victoria League and a supporter of District Nursing, was only praised for being 'hospitable and kindly'.[4] The obituary of Sophia Davies shows the qualities which won high praise. She was generous to all charities and served on several committees (though she shrank from publicity), but it was at home where she had shone:

> In the happy home in which Mrs C.E. Davies was the central figure was never heard an unkind word of anyone. Her gentle, sensitive nature, endowed with all sweet womanly qualities, had no room in it for unkind words, thoughts or deeds. In her home she was supreme, and her sceptre no one questioned, for it was one of gentleness and sympathy.[5]

Such a paragon can scarcely said to exemplify the New Woman, yet she was as much an influence on society as they. Note, however, that despite their traditional domestic role, most of these women served on committees in women's organisations. Left-wing newspapers rarely published obituaries of women, though in 1905 Nancy Hogan, the one Tasmanian woman known to have been interested in Socialism and to have read Henry George and JS Mill, was praised for this.[6] Even she, with a chance as a journalist to influence other women, wrote little about the theory of the women's movement, confining herself to comment on trivial local issues.[7]

Other comments reinforce the conclusion that the influence of feminism and the New Woman was less than total. Women were criticised for collecting money on the streets; Mrs Kermode's family and friends opposed her speaking in public, though she still did so; Caroline Morton, a capable woman active in many societies, resigned as secretary of one

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[1] *Tasmanian Mail* 6 February 1913

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 16 October 1913, 21 March 1908

[3] *Tasmanian Mail* 2 May, 1 August 1908

[4] *Tasmanian Mail* 20 July 1911

[5] *Tasmanian Mail* 22 December 1906, and see *Mercury* 22 December 1906

[6] *Clipper* 22 April 1905

[7] See section of this thesis entitled 'Influences and potential influences on Tasmanian women'

because she 'of course, must devote the major portion of her time to her husband' when he was ill.[1] Marriage was still seen as the ultimate goal for most women, and the matron of a hospital - one of the most prestigious positions open to women - resigned 'to devote her attention to women's chief charge - her own home which is shortly to be established'.[2] The *Tasmanian Mail* said Hobart society should be grateful to the University, as two new lecturers were bachelors.[3] Not only the *Mail* , the *Mercury* and the *Examiner* , but also the Labor *Daily Post,* described in lengthy detail society weddings, balls and parties. In 1910 Mrs Fereday, a '"many-sided"...cultured woman', read a paper entitled 'Woman in Tasmania', which was clearly meant to praise. The scientific woman was 'charming...a real delight to meet...No petty gossip or unkind remark ever falls from her lips...about her you will always find an atmosphere of freshness and peace'. Hardly praise for scientific achievement. Literary women were praised for their writing and teachers and nurses for their valuable work. Doubtless there were frivolous, useless, selfish and depraved women in Tasmania as in other places, but Mrs Fereday had not met them. 'The woman of Tasmania - as I know her - is altogether good and kind and charming, realising the responsibilities of life, and acting always for the good of the community and for the happiness of those around her.' Tasmania's women were like her apples, 'the finest, and sweetest, and soundest in the whole of Australasia'.[4]

On her departure in 1910, Lady Barron, the governor's wife, was asked her opinion of Tasmanian women. She said they were more self-reliant and less demonstrative than the English, splendid workers and organisers, who took on responsibilities dealt with by men in England. They had wonderful sympathy and were interested in all matters concerning education and children; also in music and art, and 'it is wonderful what some women accomplish with so little encouragement'. They loved outdoor life. If they could travel and experience the rest of the world, they would be unsurpassed in courage, adaptability, working capacities and generous kindly thought.[5] Tactfully and kindly put, Mrs Fereday and Lady Barron's comments show that Tasmanian women were practical and active, kindly, busy with charitable matters, enjoying considerable independence with much activity outside the home, both for charity and sport, but little interested in intellectual or theoretical matters and rather insular in outlook.

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[1] *Tasmanian Mail* 15 April 1905, 13 April 1907

[2] *Tasmanian Mail* 24 August 1911

[3] *Tasmanian Mail* 3 July 1913

[4] *Tasmanian Mail* 6 October 1910

[5] *Tasmanian Mail* 2 May 1912

More critical of women's position was Enid Lyons, who (admittedly writing in retrospect, in the 1960s) resented the 'hurt done to women by man's blind assumption of mental superiority':

> I think of my mother [Mrs Burnell] with her fine, sensitive mind, condemned to spend so many years of her life in small male-dominated communities where a woman was regarded solely as an adjunct to man's happiness, believed incapable of anything higher than serving the physical needs of her husband and children, deemed with no right even to hold an opinion on any but purely domestic matters. By sheer orce of character she maintained her intellectual independence, but the women of the community had accepted the masculine estimate of their value and the years of 'being different' left their mark.[1]

Reading this one might think first-wave feminism had little effect in Tasmania, but change had come, though more in Hobart than in rural towns such as that where Mrs Burnell lived; women did engage in more extra-domestic activity and their opinions were treated more seriously; they were much more visible in the community; they had gained increased dignity and status. Yet the traditional domestic role was still paramount. No woman in Tasmania challenged the prevailing concepts of feminism or conventional sexual morality, though this was so generally in first-wave feminism.[2] What Tasmanian women did want was more self-determination and autonomy, freedom from the restrictions which had been imposed on them because of their gender, freedom to enjoy activities and careers outside the home as men had. They had practical rather than theoretical aims, wanting emancipation rather than abstract rights and individual well-being rather than improvement in women's general position. The freedom to drink in a hotel or bushwalk without male supervision was more prized than legal rights.

Many aspects of first-wave feminism overseas and on the mainland were not present in Tasmania. There was little if any activity by women to achieve legal rights - to raise the age of consent or abolish the Contagious Diseases Act - and agitation for the suffrage was muted. There was little activity by working-class women, no challenge to middle class women leaders, and no women agitating to improve the lot of working women or for prison reform. No single women appeared to lead a women's movement, as happened elsewhere. There was no group fighting for women's rights, no women's newspaper, and no woman's group which transcended class barriers; activity was class-based rather than gender-based ('women', used frequently in the *Tasmanian Mail* in a general sense, always referred to middle-class women). No women appeared interested in women's rights per se, but in different aspects of women's emancipation. Many terms used to describe first-wave

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[1] Enid Lyons *The Old Haggis* Heinemann, Melbourne, 1969, p. 39

[2] Banks p. 71

feminism in other places do not apply to Tasmanian conditions: feminism in Tasmania did not move 'against great odds'[1] except that of apathy by women themselves; instead, Tasmanian women were considered fortunate to live in a society where they did not have to fight in an unwomanly way for justice.[2]

The greatest difference between first-wave feminism in Tasmania and other places was the attitude to suffrage. In America, Britain and mainland Australia the fight for women's suffrage was central to feminism: it represented the status of citizenship, it united almost all feminists, it was 'the key to all the changes women wanted'.[3] In Tasmania the fight for the vote was not central. It was only carried on because it was part of the WCTU's platform, imposed on the Tasmanian WCTU; the WCTU was active in the mid-1890s with meetings and a petition to parliament, but after women's suffrage failed to become law agitation died away. No leader arose in the struggle and the women of the upper middle classes, not involved in the WCTU, did nothing to promote women's suffrage, even though some desired it. Suffrage was finally achieved because women were granted the federal suffrage, not due to agitation by local women.

This situation indicates some characteristics of Tasmanian feminism. There were few theoreticians to urge activity, and this reflects the small population, the conservative atmosphere, the lack of intellectual stimulus, and the general apathy of the population to anything which did not affect them personally and immediately. There was little rhetoric in Tasmania about extending into the public sphere the moral virtues of family life via women voting; in fact, there was little rhetoric about women in general. Most women did not see enough advantage to themselves in voting to act to implement it; or even if they did, they did nothing. In the late 1890s there was nothing to stop agitation by women except women's apathy, as previous agitation had been largely uncriticised. Possibly such activity needed more opposition and interest taken in it than that of the diehards of the Legislative Council. The fact that no leaders emerged was probably crucial: many Tasmanian women were willing to sign a petition for the suffrage so there was some positive feeling about it, but with no leader to capitalise on this feeling, nothing happened. The local leader who did emerge, Emily Dobson, showed little interest in the vote. Rather, she led women in claiming the right to have their opinions acted on, in implementing social justice by influencing the authorities and by acting themselves in societies.

Lack of interest in the suffrage may have been caused by the strong class divisions present in Tasmania. Once the suffrage issue was taken up by the WCTU, a lower middle class organisation, women of the upper middle class, the women most likely to lead such an

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[1] Vicinus p. 122

[2] *Daily Post* 6 December 1913

[3] Searle p. 19; Banks pp. 116-123

issue, were disinclined to associate themselves with it. On occasions in other places feminism and especially suffrage united all women and overcame class barriers, but this did not eventuate in Tasmania where women activists were divided into two distinct groups: the WCTU, working for temperance and suffrage, and Emily Dobson and her following of middle class and upper middle class women, working to use women's autonomy in public matters to implement social justice, and to widen middle class interests. Neither group totally achieved its stated aim, though through their activities women did achieve a large measure of self-determination in various extra-domestic areas, the main benefit to accrue to Tasmanian women through first-wave feminism. As elsewhere, Tasmanian feminism was in two strands: with contributions from evangelicals, which emphasised social and moral reform, and the enlightenment, which stressed the women's rights as human beings[1] (under Dobson, however, this turned to the rights of all people to social justice as organised by middle class women). In Tasmania these two strands barely met.

A further difference between feminism in Tasmania and elsewhere is that from the late 1890s it lost some impetus. The WSA and WCTU lost their original determination and ceased to challenge the authorities to such an extent, the demand for the suffrage died down, few full-time students enrolled in university courses and restrictions were imposed on several occupations, for example teachers, nurses, barmaids. New activity by women came in more widely-acceptable areas, for example church groups, and in some areas like politics and trade unions women were content to support men.

Why was first-wave feminism different in Tasmania, not only from feminism in Britain and the United States where it began earlier, had a more theoretical base and had a harder struggle to achieve any results, but from movements on the Australian mainland, which also tended to be more active with wider interests? In South Australia, for example, middle class women were more vocal and confident, more successful in their activities from an earlier date, and there were several highly-regarded women leaders such as Spence.[2] Tasmania's small population is part of the explanation: there were not the numbers of educated, interested women to build up a movement, while in South Australia the middle class was more numerous, better educated, and did not suffer under the spectre of convict origins. The status and value women achieved before 1890 meant women did not feel so oppressed beforehand - there is little evidence of any feeling of oppression - and that men, with a higher opinion of women's value, did not oppose change as much as elsewhere. As well, Tasmania's conservatism meant women did not demand as much change and that many were content with none at all (for example, Minnie Clarke, who played no part in the woman's movement). Since the gold rushes Tasmania had suffered from losing many of her

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[1] Banks passim

[2] Jones chapters 1, 3, 4, 5

most intelligent and ambitious inhabitants to the mainland, and these included women, especially trained nurses, some of whom became matrons on the mainland or overseas. Thus possible feminist leaders were lost. It has been suggested that feminism was fuelled by middle class fears of a break-up of society due to Darwinism, urbanisation, legal changes such as easier divorce, working-class agitation and industrial slums, encouraging women to eulogise the family and their civilising role.[1] This was hardly the case in Tasmania, an extremely respectable, law-abiding place where trade unions were weak, the working class quiescent, prostitution not generally perceived as a problem, divorces were few, and there was little to threaten middle class supremacy; in fact, the middle class saw Tasmanian society as improving with its own influence growing, after the bad old convict days. Possibly the absence of a defensive middle class attitude meant some impetus to feminism was absent.

Also absent was marked activity by working-class women. The only evidence of any working-class challenge to middle-class women (elsewhere seen as an important feature of Australian first-wave feminism[2]) lies in several letters to the *Clipper* and *Daily Mail* criticising middle-class women's condescension and arrogance, hardly a sustained challenge. For working-class women, too, lack of numbers and general apathy meant any action was muted, and even criticism of sweating, mainly by men such as Bishop Mercer and WA Woods, gained little reaction from working-class women. As elsewhere, working-class women benefited little from first-wave feminism, though they too could join societies and their range of employment widened. It was middle-class women who benefited most,[3] as they were best situated to take up the new professional careers and participated most in voluntary activities.

Dixson writes that first-wave feminism in Australia was 'very moderate', a 'modestly successful thrust by women to improve their position vis-a-vis that of men within, and in the main without serious challenge to, a "basic gender script"'.[4] This was so in Tasmania as elsewhere, and although the thrust was not as energetic, the results were much the same; the attainment of many legal rights and the acceptability to society of women's activity outside the home, both in voluntary activity and employment, and a considerable increase in that activity, although the primary domestic role of women was unchallenged.

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[1] Carol Bacchi 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women' in Windshuttle, p. 135

[2] Searle p. 19

[3] Dixson in Grieve and Burns, p. 15

[4] Dixson in Grieve and Burns, pp. 20, 14

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